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Everybody's MAGAZINE

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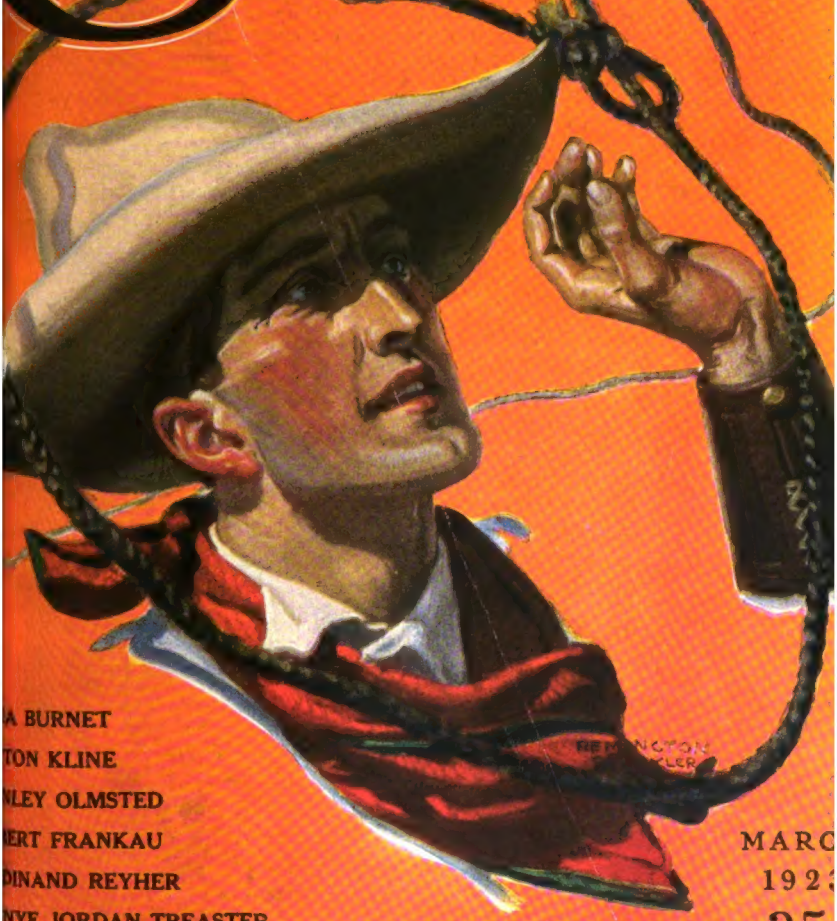

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Everybody's

NUMBER THREE MARCH, 1923 VOLUME XLVIII

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Everybody's

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The Spirit Wins

OVER twenty years ago I went out to sea, young, eager—a boy, a child indeed.

What things I saw and heard! What damnable injustices I saw perpetrated by man upon his fellow man! What a lot of the evil my eyes were opened to! I saw whole companies of men's bodies, lives, thrown away for the enrichment of the pockets of others—I suffered grim injustice myself, too. But, you know, I think that one can quite outlive and forget and conquer all that sort of thing. The spirit wins. That is why it was given us.

To-morrow there comes to my little shanty an old gray-haired man—an ancient sea-captain. He was master of my old ship. Under him I suffered hunger and hardship—needlessly. Under him my body was sacrificed for the gain of others.

Sailors were a common prey in those hard times.

The old man has long, long ago forgotten that ever he did me any injustice. I was but one of many.

To-day the old ship is gone, and all her company with her. She was lost long ago.

To-morrow the lad who went to sea those long years ago—so innocent of the old world's hardness—and the grim-eyed old captain will sit and talk together.

"Boy," says he, "what'd you do if you had your life to live over?"

"Take her out through the heads again, sir!"

The old man's face lights with a peculiar smile; his thin eyes gleam. He stares at me very hard, with his lips close shut, and leans back in his chair.

In his soul, the soul of a world-hardened old man, the soul of a man who grew up uneducated, unlettered, unread, there comes the same ring that comes in mine—the little bell that tells a man that this life is but a schooling, but the apprenticeship of the young sailor on some vast universal sea to whose ultimate bright port he shall some day win.

BILL ADAMS.

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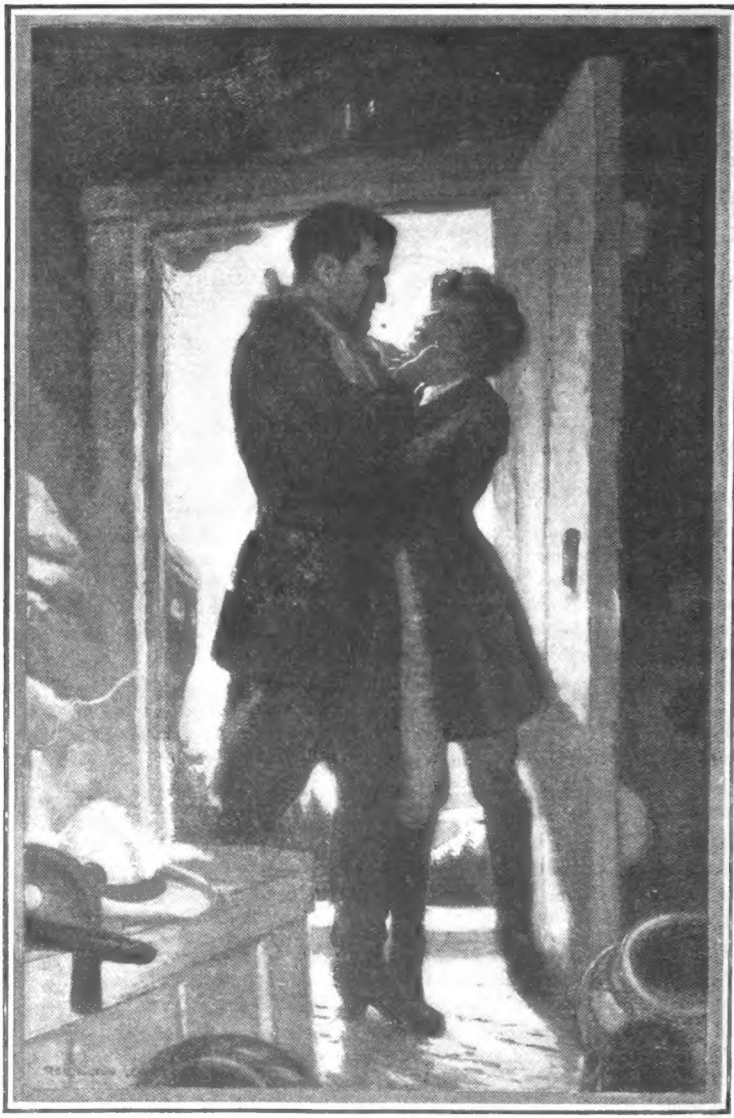

"Some day—please God!—we'll see some of this work through together—shall we not, Miriam?"

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A Serial by the Author of "Still Jim" and "Godless Valley"

THE LARIAT

A Scientist, a Fossil-Hunter, Dominated by His Dream of Uncovering the Unstoried History of Time; His Wife, Strong, Beautiful Physically but Slothful of Mind, and the Other Woman, Mentally Alert, a Doer yet Bodily Attractive. It's Round This Triangle That the Novel is Built

By Honoré Willsie

Illustrations by Remington Schuyler

SO THE fine adventure had failed. Not but what Hugh knew that to-morrow he would begin to plan another and equally fine adventure. Yet he and Fred and old Red Wolf were as deeply depressed as though all the fossil remains of Wyoming had been destroyed when the slide had crushed the newly exposed body of the giant dinosaur. To be sure, Red Wolf, after the first shock of failure had passed, had tried to tell Hugh of a certain fabulous cliff-dwelling full of bones, sacred to the mysterious origins of the Sioux tribe. But Hugh, angry and bereft, would not listen. He gave orders to break camp, and the start for home was made two hours after the south slope of the mountain had jealously recovered the remains of that gigantic memory of the past.

The mountain bordered the extreme west line of the Old Sioux Tract. The Roaring Chief River paralleled that west line fifteen miles to the east. Between lay a rugged upheaval of mountains and cañons, deep now in December snows.

It was mid-morning when Hugh led the way out of the camp under the lee of the mountain southeastward into the wild valley that lay between the fossil-peak and a flat-topped plateau known chiefly as the haunt of wild horses. Save for occasional gnarled cedar clumps, the brilliant orange-and-red sides of the peak and the plateau were barren. Even the snow had been unable to cling to those steep, hard walls. But the floor of the valley was covered with quivering aspens, whose pastel-green trunks and delicate gray boughs were too thickly set to permit the passage of a rider. Hugh led the little caravan along the rough, snowy space that remained open between the wall of the plateau and the aspen grove.

The going was extremely rough. Hugh sat tense in the saddle, spurring his horse, Fossil, over rock heap and through drifts as though he found mental easement in doubling thus the difficulties of the trail. Fred Allward, the little gray-bearded man who drove the freight-wagon, and old Red Wolf, driving the sheep wagon, huddled in their mackinaws, swore at the mules and glanced askance at Hugh.

Hugh, in spite of the tensity of his seat, rode with the easy assurance of one bred to the saddle. He showed thin and muscular even through his mackinaw and corduroy riding-breeches. A round beaver-skin cap pulled low hid all his hair save a thick

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chestnut lock that blew across his forehead. His face was long and thin like his body, with high cheek-bones and a long jaw-line that showed sharply beneath his ears. There were lines round his gray eyes, drawn there by sun-strain, by irritation and by humor. It was by no means a handsome face—though it clearly showed a fine intelligence. His mouth alone was beautiful. It was full-curved and sensitive—a curiously ardent mouth to dwell in so fine-drawn a face. Hugh was in the thirtieth year of his age.

It was three o'clock when he led the way out of the narrow valley into a wider one, blue with snow and treeless save for a grove of spruce a mile to the north. Hugh headed directly for this grove, and Fred sighed with relief and lit his pipe.

Hugh, too, suddenly conscious of the unbelievable beauty about him, relaxed a little in the saddle. A world of blue sky and snow and distant heaven-kissing peaks. Even the spruce trees, as he led toward them, showed a true, though darker, blue against the snow. The great bronze cones, massed in the higher boughs of the trees, gave the only variety to the great monotone. At the edge of the grove, Hugh turned in the saddle.

"Let's make camp, boys!" he called.

Fred pulled his mules to their haunches so suddenly that Red Wolf's team bumped their noses on the tail-board of the freight-wagon. Red Wolf grunted, swung his mules clear and leaped over their flinging hind legs to the ground. He began to unhitch at once, while Fred built the fire in the little stove in the sheep wagon, and Hugh, with his gun over his arm, followed new rabbit-tracks that led into the grove.

IT WAS dusk when the three men crowded into the sheep wagon to eat supper. It was as snug within as the cabin of a tiny ship. There were bunks at one end of the wagon, a little stove and kitchen fittings at the other. In the middle, a narrow table that lifted against the frame of the canopy when not in use. When all the fried rabbit had been devoured and the third round of coffee begun, Hugh broke the silence.

"Well, I'm sorry I went loco this morning, boys. But that was the most nearly perfect specimen I've ever seen, and it was nothing but fool carelessness that lost him us."

"My carelessness mostly," grunted Fred, draining his coffee-cup, then taking a huge bite of plug. "You'd think I'd have learned how to shore up a wall after thirty years of mining."

"An autopsy isn't going to bring back the dinosaur," sighed Hugh. "We'll get back to Fort Sioux and outfit for prospecting Lost Basin. The snows won't get in there before February."

Red Wolf, his lean, wrinkled bronze face concentrated above the cigarette he was rolling, gave no apparent heed to these comments. But when he had lit the cigarette, he looked thoughtfully at Hugh.

"Sioux Injuns," he said, "know heap more 'bout Old Sioux Tract than whites do."

Hugh returned the old Indian's look with sudden interest.

"Does that mean you've got a story to tell me, Red Wolf?"

The Old Sioux continued to stare at Hugh. He and the young scientist had been friends since Hugh's childhood days of arrow-head collecting. But even at that, it was obvious that Red Wolf was wondering whether or not to speak. Fred jammed another cedar-knot into the stove, piled the dishes in a pan, heaped the pan high with snow and set it on a red-hot lid. Then he established his feet on the hearth, took another bite of plug and waited. Finally Red Wolf said in his husky, carefully modulated voice:

"Your Uncle Bookie, he owns Old Sioux Tract, but he never use it. Great Spirit won't let 'im. You know why?"

Hugh shook his head.

"Uncle Bookie's been as secret with me about the tract as he has with every one else."

"That's all bunk!" exclaimed Fred. "Everybody knows the Old Sioux Tract is mixed up in Bookie's mind with Jimmy Duncan and the cattle-wars of the 'Eighties. Some of us always did think Bookie knew a lot about Jimmy's disappearance."

"Oh, dry up, Fred!" growled Hugh, as he lit his pipe. "Uncle Bookie was a little wild as a young fellow, but he'd never be morbid about it. Fact is, I think he's as proud of the notches on his gun as he is of The Lariat."

"A little wild!" snorted Fred. "Say, Hughie; you young fellows who have always put Bookie down as a gentle old has-been would drop dead if you could see that man's man as he was in the old days. He came

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out here full of Harvard education, and everybody laughed at him. But before he'd been here five years he'd settled the cattle-war at the point of his gun, helped himself to what land he wanted from the old Frisco gang he'd rid out, and settled down to ranch-life. Just how he did it, or how many notches he carries on that old six-shooter of his, only Bookie knows."

"I've always known that." Hugh nodded. "Nevertheless, I always thought his feeling against any use being made of the Old Sioux Tract had something to do with an old love-affair."

"You're crazy, Hughie! No woman's influence could last that long with a he man like Bookie."

Hugh shrugged his shoulders, thought of Jessie, and turned to Red Wolf.

"Why won't the Great Spirit let Uncle Bookie use the tract, Red Wolf?" he asked.

"This valley," said the Sioux, "run ten miles over to river cañon."

"I know." Hugh nodded.

"All Injuns of the world," Red Wolf went on, "Great Spirit borned in this valley, over by river. Long, long time ago, before any white man was born on earth, the Great Spirit he made a few Injuns and put 'em in this valley and showed 'em trail lead to cave above river. 'Injuns' said Great Spirit, 'you live there. You stay there. You be safe. You have many children. You rule earth if you stay here and no fight. No fight yourselves. When one Injun first fight other Injun, then world be full of trouble for all Injuns.'"

HUGH listened with kindling interest. Fred's bearded face was expressionless.

"Injuns had many, many children," Red Wolf went on. "Soon cave pretty near full of Injuns. But they never fight. Pretty happy. Then, one day, young Injun he made bow and arrow, first one ever made on earth. He make mistake and shoot other boy. That start terrible fight. All Injuns take sides, make bows and arrows, kill each other till only one Injun man, one Injun squaw left. And they bleed much. Then Great Spirit he heap mad. He drive out man and woman. He break up trail to cave. He say no Injun ever can come back. He put devil-beast in to watch cave. Devil-beast he eat any Injun that come back to cave. Injuns they never had home since. They no can have home till some one kill the devil-beast, take him out of cave. Then Injuns they come back to cave, have many children, rule earth."

"Has any one ever seen the devil-beast, Red Wolf?" asked Hugh.

"Blood-curse on any Injun ever try to get down to cave," replied the Sioux evasively.

Hugh eyed his old friend thoughtfully.

"What do you suppose that devil-beast looks like, Red Wolf?"

"I don't know." Red Wolf shook his head. "But old, old chief told my father he look like stone devil slide cover up this morning."

Hugh lifted his head excitedly.

"Lord, Red Wolf! Why haven't you told me this before?"

"We never dig up devil look like this before," replied the Indian.

"Naturally not!" cried Hugh. "One doesn't go out and dig up a triceratops every morning before breakfast. Show me where this cave is, Red Wolf."

The old Sioux scowled and rolled another cigarette before he replied:

"You get that stone devil uncovered, ready to move out of mountain. Great spirit send slide, take him back. All Injuns but me they heap much afraid of stone devils. Now me heap afraid."

"Maybe it's meant for Indians to be afraid," said Hugh. "But, also, it's evidently meant that the white man must take that devil out of the cave. You let me have a look at him, old boy."

"Maybe it's just naturally unlucky, Hughie." Fred spoke cautiously. "Must be some kind of bad medicine connected with it, because the Indians never talk about it to the whites. This is the first time I ever heard of it."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Hugh. "As if there were any reason why an Indian ever should tell a white anything!"

Red Wolf nodded.

"Whites heap big liars, always laugh at Injuns—all but Hughie."

"Go on, you big red man!" shouted Fred. "Did you ever have a better friend than me?"

"He a better friend," replied Red Wolf, pointing to Hugh. Then he added anxiously, "You not afraid?"

"Not a bit!" returned Hugh. "We'll camp on the cañon edge to-morrow evening.

Everybody's Magazine, March, 1923

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Come on! Let's get to bed and have an early start."

THEY covered the ten snow-packed miles before dusk the next afternoon. The valley sloped rapidly toward the river, so speed was possible despite the difficulties of the trail. All signs of trees, even of sage-brush, disappeared before they reached the end of the day's journey. They made the night camp in a shallow draw which opened into the river cañon.

The moon rose before supper was ready, and Hugh, having hobbled Fossil to their mutual satisfaction, stood at the cañon-end of the draw, staring down at the vague tracing of the river below. He had little doubt that Red Wolf's story was founded upon some actual tragedy of the past, and all the scientist in him was on tiptoe with interest. Somewhere beneath the keen, fossil-hunting paleontologist which was the Hugh his wife and friends knew, there might have been a Hugh as ardent, that night, as his sensitive, wistful mouth suggested. Yet Hugh himself was unconscious of the possibility, for, though thrilled by the beauty of the scene, he was wishing—not that Jessie, his wife, were sharing the wonder of the night with him—he was wishing that he were sufficiently the artist to reproduce the magic of this fossil country for his report on this, the most tantalizing and so far the most disappointing of his expeditions.

Considering his claim that he never had been in the cave, Red Wolf showed a surprising accuracy of knowledge as to the best method of reaching that place of mystery.

"Can't climb down," he said that evening, in reply to Hugh's query. "Cave maybe fifty feet down and under. Can't see from top. You have let us lower you down; then you have swing yourself under. See?"

Hugh nodded.

"That new one-inch manila will come in right."

Fred grunted.

"You've got more enthusiasm over stone birds than I have, Hughie."

"You'd risk it for a mine discovery without turning a hair, Fred," chuckled Hugh.

"Right!" agreed Fred. "But not for Injun bones."

Nevertheless, the next morning, when the three men crept to the edge of the river cañon and peered over at the receding wall, Fred insisted that his be the privilege of making the intial trip. Hugh, his eyes bright and eager, laughed at him.

"I'm the Columbus of this expedition, Fred. Here—ease this knot under my shoulder-blade. I wouldn't miss being the first down for a thousand dollars."

"You're risking a good deal on an Injun's pipe-dream," insisted Fred. "And supposing there is a jinx on the place, like he says."

Red Wolf stared at Fred impersonally, then turned to Hugh.

"You got your hammer?"

"Yes; inside my coat. I'll use the pick to help fend me from the wall. Come on, boys; lower away! Snub to the wagon-axle when I shout."

Hugh seated himself on the icy edge of the brim, which was still slippery in spite of Fred's efforts to roughen it with his ax. Then he slid slowly out into space, turning as he did so to face the cañon wall. This receded gently but decidedly, so that by the time he had been lowered twenty feet, he was almost beyond arm-reach of its smooth red face. He gave himself a gentle push, calling to the men to let the rope out rapidly. By the time he had reached a black opening in the menacing red wall, he was oscillating gently back and forth.

"Snub her quick, Fred!" he shouted. He worked his long body pendulum-like now, until the gentle oscillation had increased to a wide stroke that carried him far out above the sickening depths below, then well into the door of the cave. He flung his pickax into the opening and grasped the side of the orifice, slid for a painful moment, then, a little white and breathless, stood firmly within the cave. He untied the rope and looped it over a black-cedar log that projected into the doorway. Then he looked about him.

The light of the rising sun flooded the cave. First, he saw a level stone floor, littered with human bones, with arrow-heads and stone axes; a red floor with bones ghastly white and in pathetically entangled heaps, telling of death-throes horrible to contemplate. From the embattled floor, Hugh's eyes lifted to the wall of the cave, which was perhaps a hundred feet deep but which did not, at that, stretch beyond the

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rays of the sun. And when his eyes had fallen on the rear wall, he gave a low exclamation and forgot the tragic story at his feet as though it did not exist.

At the rear of the cave, ten feet above the floor, was a projecting mass of stone that the merciless red light of the sun pricked out in a horror of detail that instantly accounted for Red Wolf's tale of fear and mystery. A gigantic bony head—the head of a horned toad magnified to the proportions of an elephant—a head with gaping, sagging lower jaw, armored with enormous teeth, with horned snout lifted as if it sniffed perpetually after an ever-present enemy, with cavernous eye-sockets that glowered with horrible simulation of vision upon the scene of ancient carnage.

Hugh paused beneath the terrible skull long enough to observe the broken remains of an ancient altar that lay on the floor; then he clambered up to examine the marvelous discovery. After a few moments of ecstatic exploration, he went back to fetch the pick. With infinite care he then prospected the entire rear wall of the cave, and in a short time had satisfied himself that just beneath the surface of the rock lay the remains of a dinosaur whose rarity and perfection surpassed any of his previous discoveries. Conscious, finally, of the increasing cold as the sun deserted the cave, he returned to the entrance and knotted the rope under his arms. Then only did he note that a skeleton clad in an old overcoat sat crouched within the shadow of the opening.

He knelt hastily, then with great care examined the clothing. His face was troubled when he had finished, and he stood for a time in anxious thought before shouting to Fred and Red Wolf to pull him up. He was entirely absent-minded as he spiraled upward, and made the difficult scramble over the edge quite automatically.

"My Gawd, Hughie!" shouted Fred, when the young man finally stood panting beside him. "I hope you discovered free gold to pay for the scare you give me and Red Wolf."

"It's a wonder, Fred!" said Hugh seriously. "A wonder! A triceratops, without a doubt."

"I suppose that means something to you," snorted Fred. "How about me and the Injun?"

Hugh turned to Red Wolf.

"You were right. It's the same kind of stone devil that we lost under the slide—only a good deal bigger and with a perfect skull, which the other didn't have. We'll get him out of there all right."

Red Wolf scratched his head thoughtfully.

"You see many dead Injuns down there? You see anything else?"

"How do you mean—anything else?" demanded Hugh quickly.

The Indian shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"What's the idea?" asked Fred suspiciously.

"The idea is," replied Hugh, "that it's not going to be so hard to get the specimen exhumed, but that it is going to be the very devil to get him out of the cave. I believe that the best way will be to lower the cases down to the river."

"All right." Fred nodded. "Only, you can't get a boat up Roaring Chief River in the winter."

"I know," agreed Hugh. "But I have a feeling that if I don't get that old brute out now, I won't get him out at all."

"What's the matter? Got bitten by the bad-medicine idea."

"Maybe." Hugh laughed. "Anyhow, I'm going to get at the preliminary work this afternoon. I'll have something to eat; then I'll go down again, and you folks can lower the packing-cases and the rest of the materials to me."

"What's the matter with me?" demanded Fred. "Don't I qualify as a bone-miner any more?"

"You'll think you do to-morrow morning, when we begin to get that head out," replied Hugh. "We'll never get Red Wolf within a mile of it."

"I ain't just drooling to get at it myself," said Fred, "but I aim to keep step with you in nerve if not in brains." He gave Hugh a grin that was not without admiring affection, and began preparations for dinner.

THEY made short work of the meal and were unloading the freight-wagon when a rider came into the camp.

"Am I too late for grub?" he cried.

Hugh gave a welcoming shout.

"Uncle Bookie!" A tall old man slid from his horse and clasped the young man in a shameless embrace. Even when he had freed Hugh from the bear-hug, Bookie stood

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with his hand on his foster-nephew's shoulder while he grinned at Fred and Red Wolf.

"I hoped it wouldn't snow till I picked up the smoke of the sheep wagon," he said. "What happened at the other camp?"

"A slide that ruined the two months' work," replied Hugh. "Anything wrong at Fort Sioux, Uncle Bookie?"

"There certainly is! A certain fool geologist forgot to come home for Christmas."

"By Jove!" cried Hugh. "This is Christmas eve."

"Wonderful memory you always did have, Hughie!" said Bookie.

Fred joined in Hugh's laughter, adding:

"I'll heat that kettle of stew. Look to your saddle, stranger!"

Hugh nodded to the Indian.

"Look to the saddle, Red Wolf—will you? Come into the wagon, Uncle Bookie. I've just made the discovery of my life. Some Christmas gift, I'll say!"

The older man followed Hugh and rested himself on the edge of the lower bunk with a sigh, probably of pleasure, for he was smiling at Hugh as he did so.

JOHN HAVERFORD SMITH, known to all Wyoming as "Bookie" Smith, was very thin and very brown, with a small bald head topping a long whip-cord neck. He had deep-brown eyes set far apart—eyes that were full of light but that told no tales on Bookie. If, as Hugh often thought, the old man's life had been one of mental hunger, his eyes did not say so. If life's lovely, heart-breaking, mirth-provoking pageant had left him sterile, his fine brown eyes did not say so. They were merely the casements from which his lonely and sensitive soul gazed at the world. For the rest, his face was clean-shaven and austere of line; his hands were long and startlingly white, the hands of the perpetually gloved rider.

He unbuttoned his mackinaw, showing a black coat buttoned over a blue-flannel shirt, then said,

"How'd you come to make camp just here, Hughie?"

"Well, I was so devilishly disappointed yesterday over the loss of the specimen that old Red Wolf unfolded a story about a stone devil that he thought a white man could drive out of a certain mysterious cave hereabouts. He declared he could show it to me, and—by Jove!—the old boy made good. Lord, Uncle Bookie! There's a triceratops down there that will make the mouths water of several museums I know."

Bookie pulled off his mackinaw and put a spurred foot up on the hearth to dry.

"Take off that cap, Hughie, and let me have a square look at you. Who cut your hair?"

"Fred took a hand at it the other day."

Hugh grinned and tossed his cap into the upper bunk. His close-cropped head thus displayed was of curiously noble proportions.

"There you are!" said Bookie. "Your head should have made something besides a bone-digger of you, Hughie. But, Lord! Why should an old failure like me croak about that?"

A little glint of irritation showed for a moment in Hugh's eyes, but it was replaced by a glance of sympathy as he perceived an unwonted expression of weariness, almost of weakness, on Bookie's thin lips.

"Fred"—Hugh turned suddenly to the old miner—"I don't believe we'll begin the job this afternoon, seeing that we have company and it's Christmas eve. Suppose you and Red Wolf try your luck at antelope. We ought to have a real dinner to-morrow."

Fred poured a cupful of melted snow into the coffee-pot and smiled.

"Best idea you've had in two months, Hughie! Will you dish this here mess for Bookie?"

Hugh nodded, and Fred slammed out of the wagon.

"Thanks, Hughie!" said Bookie. "It isn't very often I get a chance for a real talk with you."

Hugh served the old man's meal with the deftness of hand characteristic of him before he asked,

"Was there something particular on your mind, Uncle Bookie?"

"I suppose there is," replied Bookie, "though I didn't fully realize it till I got here. I'm getting old, Hughie, and you are all I have, and I miss you."

Hugh, perched on the bunk-edge while his uncle ate, nodded understandingly.

"And you are all I have, too, Uncle Bookie."

"You oughtn't to eliminate Jessie that way, Hughie," said Bookie.

Hugh's clear gray eyes looked unblinkingly into Bookie's.

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Bookie stood with his hand on his foster-nephew's shoulder. "I hoped it wouldn't snow till I picked up the smoke of the sheep wagon," he said. "What happened at the other camp?"

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"You and I don't have to make pretenses about Jessie, do we? If I must bluff the rest of the world, I can be honest with you,"

"Jessie is all right. She just isn't your kind—that's all. I told you before you married her that you'd outgrow her before you were twenty-five."

"Well"—Hugh's low voice was stern—"it's come as you said, and I'm paying the bill in loneliness, but I haven't complained except when Jess and her mother go after me too hard about my work."

"Everybody over thirty is lonely," said Bookie, "and some younger than that. Jessie is lonely—or I miss my guess."

"Is it Jessie that you wanted to talk to me about?" asked Hugh skeptically.

"Only incidentally," Bookie answered, after a long pause, during which he finished his meal and Hugh filled and half smoked a pipe. "Only incidentally. I'm getting old, Hughie. I live in the past. It's a sure sign."

Hugh packed the dishes into the dishpan and slung the table against the wall. Then he stretched himself on the bench thus exposed and nodded toward the lower bunk.

"Ease yourself over there, Uncle Bookie, and get it all off your chest."

Bookie smiled.

"I wish it was as simple as that, boy." "I've had an interesting life—a lot more interesting than most folks, chock-full of adventure, and yet, sitting there alone in the old book store night after night, do you know what I think about? The woman I didn't marry—the son I didn't have—the good I didn't do."

He paused, and Hugh eyed him wistfully.

"You might be cataloguing my own losses, Uncle Bookie."

"As a matter of fact, Hughie, you are so wrapped up in your work that you don't look on those things as losses but as assets. Come, now; isn't that true? And you are looking at me sadly out of pure love and sympathy for me—eh?"

Hugh laughed.

"Right, Uncle Bookie! Lord! I wouldn't give up my work for anything on earth."

"Don't make wild boasts, boy. Life's just begun for you. Don't fix yourself so that every gol-darned holiday that comes along, especially Christmas, makes you feel like an empty gourd—especially Christmas."

"By Jove, Uncle Bookie! Don't tell me an old gun-notcher like you is getting sentimental!"

"Exactly! I'm getting sentimental. Every human being has to pay toll sometime in the shape of sentimentality. Most folks are lucky enough to get through it while they're young. But I stalled it off, and now I have to pay. Take this matter of Christmas. Christmas isn't a religious festival. It's a state of mind. It's a yearly return to the basic principles on which civilization has covered even the small amount of ground it's covered so far. Hughie, do you remember the Christmas we used to have on the ranch before your mother died?" Hugh nodded. "Do you remember the last one while your father still lived?"

Hugh shook his head.

"No. I was only six. But I was ten when mother went."

"Tell me some of the things you remember, boy."

Hugh, wondering much as to what was passing in his foster-uncle's mind, complied readily enough, speaking carefully as he turned back into his childhood.

"I remember the tree, of course, and you and mother full of secrets for days beforehand. I recall very clearly the feeling of—of—magic in the air. I wonder what gave me that. Jove! I can get it now if I let my mind dwell on it."

HE CLOSED his eyes and slipped back into a past which he had not entered for years. His tall, gray-eyed mother, the tree, the lights, the gifts, the candle in the window, stars—myriads of stars—and, every Christmas, himself and his mother walking slowly out beyond the corrals to be alone with the Star of the East. She had been a deeply religious woman—his tall, gray-eyed mother—and though Hugh had drifted far from her teachings, he was never to forget them. So now he heard her again, repeating to the little boy the old, old story, felt again the nearness to a great glory and a great tragedy, sensed his mother's passionate love for him and his for her, sensed her overwhelming desire for him to achieve something as stupendous as that other mother had desired for that other and deeply tragic child—and he perceived again in the boy of seven that strange regret which

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had grown in him with the years, a regret based on the understanding that life had expended endless glories which he could never know, that those glories were almost within hand-touch if one only could believe enough—if only— Hugh sighed.

"I can't put much of it into words, Uncle Bookie. Most of it lay between mother and me"

"You can't recall that last Christmas eve and your mother and what she said?"

"Oh—that!" Hugh stirred restlessly. "She died the next day. Don't make me go into that. I had to shut it out of my mind years ago. It broke my heart."

"I know. But for once, Hughie—for me. What did she say?"

Hugh laid his pipe down and sat up slowly. His beautiful mouth twisted with old pain.

"She said, 'Hughie, be big enough to make up for your father's failure—and mine and Uncle Bookie's.' He wiped the moisture from his lips. "Why are you doing this to me, Uncle Bookie?"

There was satisfaction mingled with sympathy in the old man's voice.

"I had to see whether you'd gone entirely cold, Hughie. But you haven't, thank God!"

Hugh's lips stiffened.

"I thought you understood me better than this, Uncle Bookie."

"I understand you better than any one else does, Hughie, and I'm convinced that fossils aren't going to satisfy you as you grow into middle age. You ought to mix more with folks and read more books."

Hugh's long chin set till his jaw showed white beneath his ears. It was an old sore, and even Bookie could not touch it with impunity. The older man realized this, and his voice was very gentle as he went on:

"Do you think fossil-hunting is big enough to make up for your father's failure and mine? I won't admit that your mother failed. She was a saint."

"I think it could be," replied Hugh stoutly. "But I don't admit that you're a failure.

"I am a failure. I had a good brain, and I never used more than a quarter of it. I was satisfied to play smarty out here with a gun when I might have been doing my share toward making Wyoming as big as her plains."

"I thought the book store was the dream of your life!" exclaimed Hugh.

"It was; but I didn't do the things with it I planned to do."

"Why not?" Hugh's voice was full of surprise.

"I had missed the thing that makes a man fight to live up to his dreams—the real love of a real woman."

"I'm living up to my dreams without that," said Hugh shortly.

"Maybe your dreams don't amount to much," returned the old man.

Hugh flushed, but said nothing.

"I'm not trying to hurt you, Hughie, God knows!" cried Bookie, sitting erect suddenly. "You are the son I never had, and I yearn over you as you can't understand. You are going through life blind to all the enormous possibilities in you, and it seems as if it would kill me, sitting alone there in The Lariat."

Hugh reached over to put a finely cut, strong hand on Bookie's knee.

"Is The Lariat only a book shop to you, after all, Uncle Bookie? We all thought it was a lot more."

"God!" groaned the old man.

Hugh let his hand remain where he had laid it while he said sadly:

"I'm sorry I'm a disappointment to you, Uncle Bookie. I wish I could make you see the enormous possibilities of my profession."

"I'm not doubting those possibilities for a minute. But that isn't saying that it brings out your best powers, is it?"

BOTH men lay down again, and for a moment there was no sound save the crackling of the cedar-knots in the little stove; then Hugh said slowly:

"Uncle Bookie, down in the cave below us, this morning, I found a skeleton wearing a suit of clothes. In the pocket of the overcoat was an envelope addressed to Jimmy Duncan."

Bookie slowly reached into his hip-pocket, took a careful bite of tobacco, and after reinserting the remainder of the plug, turned on his back again.

"I left Jimmy down there twenty-three years ago this Christmas."

"Did you put a notch on your gun, Uncle Bookie?"

"You can bet I did! A deep one!"

"Why, Uncle Bookie?"

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"Because he was a skunk."

"Will you tell me about it?"

"I'll try. I loved your mother from the time she came out here with your poor one-lunged dad. He knew it, and before he died he tried to get her to promise she'd marry me. But she didn't love anybody but him, and never did, and though she stayed on for five years after his death as my housekeeper, she never would be any more to me than a pal—God bless her, Hughie! She was a beautiful soul—beautiful! Jimmy Duncan was a cattle-runner in those days, and he and his gang used the river section of this tract for running their herds. In those times he wasn't considered so disrespectable, and once in a while he took a meal up at my ranch. He went plumb, raving crazy over your mother. I warned him off. She sure did hate him, but he got to coming back when I'd be in Fort Sioux. On Christmas eve, twenty-three years ago, I came back to find her standing him off with a gun.

"I'm not going into details. They still upset me. But he got away from me, and I tracked him here, to this very spot. We took several pot-shots at each other; then, during the night, a half-breed helped him down into that cave, and afterward double-crossed him and lowered me down. I didn't trouble to bury the skunk. Naturally, I never told anything about it for your mother's sake. Curiously enough, the half-breed was killed the next day. They said he slipped over the cañon. I took over the Old Sioux Tract and tried to give it to your mother. When she wouldn't have it, I swore no one should ever use it if she wouldn't. And so far I've kept my word. You've never found a dinosaur on it before, have you, Hughie?"

"No. But I have an idea it may prove to be a great fossil-field. You aren't going to object to my prospecting it, are you?"

The old man answered, with unexpected obstinacy,

"I don't aim to break my word during my lifetime, Hughie."

"But you aren't going to refuse to let me get that triceratops out?" cried Hugh.

"Yes; I think I shall. It can't mean as much pleasure to you as it does pain to me. You let Jimmy Duncan's grave alone."

"Oh—but here, Uncle Bookie! I'll take that skunk's bones and clothes and burn them. I wish I could add insult and ignominy to them, too." Hugh paused, as the significance of that generation-old killing swept over him. Then he said, "After all, he didn't actually harm mother, and I think she'd be glad to have me bring something memorable out of that cave." He paused once more as a picture of his mother's Christmas-face beneath the winter stars rose before his eyes. "And on Christmas eve, too! What a hell's spawn he was! Where was I, Uncle Bookie?"

"In bed and asleep," replied the old man, watching his foster-nephew intently.

"I was only seven," said Hugh apologetically. "I shall kick his bones into the river to-morrow"—a sudden passion showing in his voice that brought an answering gleam into Bookie's brown eyes. Again Hugh's jaw gleamed white beneath the ears. "Let me clean the cave up, Uncle Bookie. She'd want me to."

"I can't, Hughie. I thought maybe I could, but it won't work. She wouldn't take the tract from me. It was the only cruel thing she ever did. She sha'n't take it from you—by God!"

Hugh poked the fire.

"Uncle Bookie," he said, "I'm sorry to go against you, but, as a paleontologist, I've got no right to leave that dinosaur down there to chance."

"Well, let's not debate the matter on Christmas eve, Hughie." The old man sighed. "I'm going back home to-morrow, and of course you can do what you please."

"Yes; let's leave it that way," agreed Hugh eagerly.

"Your work must come first, eh?" asked Bookie slowly, "before any human weakness or relationship?"

Hugh answered, with sudden vehemence,

"Yes—by Jove—and it always shall!"

Then he opened the door and went out into the bitter dusk.

BOOKIE showed no signs of perturbation or disappointment that evening, and he left the next noon, after a venison dinner and a long argument with Red Wolf as to the relative value of old and new Sioux beadwork. On the day after Christmas, in spite of a driving snow, Hugh began work on the exhuming of the triceratops. He insisted upon being lowered first to receive the implements required in the

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delicate and highly technical business of uncovering the stone devil.

It was bitter cold and dusky within the cave. Hugh's first acts were to rip out some of the ancient cedar posts with which a portion of the walls were shored and to start a fire in the crude stone fireplace which still leaned crazily against a crevice to the left of the doorway. This done, he stood in the fire-glow, arms folded, staring at the skeleton in the overcoat. Then a sudden fury swept over him, and with a swift movement of his foot he thrust the ghastly remains of Jimmy Duncan into the roaring flames. An hour later, he shouted up to his helpers to lower the first box.

Red Wolf had declined to come down, and Hugh, knowing the old man's reasons did not urge him.

The cave was very dry, and there had been little weathering of the dinosaur. Nevertheless, it took all of Hugh's knowledge and skill of hand, combined with Fred's not-to-be-despised facility in the handling of the pick and shovel, to work the triceratops out of its long resting-place. Toward the last, when it would have seemed impossible to the lay eye to save a crumbling rib or the strange armor of the neck, the pick was abandoned, and the two men, hands stiffened with the cold, worked with awl and brush until the whole terrible length of the monster had been perfectly exhumed. Then each fossil bone must be saturated with mucilage and wrapped with burlap strips dipped in plaster of Paris before being packed carefully into boxes and crates.

Hugh worked, as he always did over a specimen, in a sort of frenzy of enthusiasm. He never mentioned the biting cold, the ghastly trip night and morning, dangling from the twisting rope over the far black depths of the river. Indeed, he did not think of these things. But he did note with never-ending pleasure the drama of the picture—the firelight leaping on the red walls, the awful heaps of dead men mingled with the tiny bones of children, the ancient pottery—here, indeed, was the record of a glory that he could rescue from the jealous past. The present, with its discomforts, its inhibitions, didn't exist for him.

When, after many weeks, the awful god of the cave had been rendered harmless, the two men packed up the best of the ancient weapons and pottery and sent them up the wall to the camp. The cases containing the triceratops were too heavy to handle thus, and were destined to remain in the cave until spring, when the river would be hospitable to the idea of transporting them. They drew on Red Wolf's help, however, in working out a crude trail down to the river from the cave-opening. This took many days of hard toil.

IT WAS late March when the camp was broken and the start was made for Fort Sioux, the freight-wagon loaded with the boxes of weapons and pottery.

The snows were disappearing from the plains, though they were still heavy along the cañon edge. Spring was in the air if not underfoot on the last day of the trip, and Hugh found himself unexpectedly eager to reach the warmth and comfort of Fort Sioux, which lay on the cañon floor. He was eager for the physical comfort of home, but dreading in a wordless way the reaction of Jessie to his months of absorbing work. However, it would be highly appreciated in New York if it was not in Fort Sioux, thought Hugh, his mouth twisting slightly as he thought of Jessie's inevitable comment:

"Gee whiz! It's like being married to the keeper of a cemetery!"

It was mid-morning, and he wanted to make Fort Sioux that night. Ten miles of sandy road. He settled to this last lap of the journey with dogged determination. All day long the road appeared and disappeared over the rolling yellow plains like quicksilver.

They stopped for a very short noon-rest at the government wells, then urged the tired horses on. A long, sun-drenched afternoon, and then toward sundown a startling glimpse again of the cañon, in which floated the opalescent clouds of spring. The road seemed to drop into the cañon with utter finality. But Hugh spurred Fossil to the brink without hesitation. This was the old home trail, corkscrewing down and down into the tremendous gash. He waited for the teams to come up to him, eying, as he did so, the black line of the river on the far level floor beneath, and beyond the river, backed solidly against the turreted wall of the cañon, the little town of red-roofed houses.

It was Fort Sioux and home. Homel

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Hugh grunted as he uttered the word. Home—Jessie—his mother-in-law! But, at any rate, there was Uncle Bookie. The lead team came up, and Hugh took the dropping trail.

Fort Sioux! A frontier town, treeless, wind-swept, lonely as the sky—a single long, sandy street bordered by dreary frame buildings. The dark river rushed harshly behind the street.

The inhabitants, of course, boasted much of the little town—particularly the male inhabitants. Part of this was sincere. They really considered Fort Sioux the center of the universe, and an admirable center, too. But part of their boasting was a protective armor donned to offset the attacks of the Woman's Club, which, led by Hugh's mother-in-law, Mrs. Pink Morgan, had been bent on cleaning Fort Sioux, parking it, paving it, lighting it and otherwise making it a comfortable place in which to live. It takes a solid front of complacency to withstand the attacks of a woman's club, but the men of Fort Sioux were solid to the core.

Hugh and his Uncle Bookie, however, could not be accounted as a part of these shock troops, although they were citizens of the little town. Hugh saw Fort Sioux only as a shipping-point for dinosaurs, but Bookie saw its true beauty. To Bookie, the lonely town included in its environs not only the ugly streets and the hideous dwellings but the cañon walls that hemmed it in and the wide plains above and the sweeping freedom of the sky. And from the window of his book store Bookie saw the life of the little town as a panorama of exceeding brilliancy and beauty.

Space, color, wide winds and mellow sun, dust of bellowing herds, shouting cow-men, the smell of leather and horse-sweat, the clamor of the locomotive shops, the shriek of transcontinental trains, the rush of Indian ponies urged by unsmiling braves, tourists Fording up to Bookie's dude ranch, fossil-hunters packing prehistoric burdens, and always the unremitting uproar of the river.

BOOKIE was standing at his window, the window of the Lariat Book Shop, when Hugh led his precious train across the bridge and up the street to the railroad corral. Hugh waved to him in passing. The old man's face, not Jessie's, would give him his true home-coming. After all, a man must find that look of home somewhere or be no better than a beast with only a lair, Hugh thought, as he turned the freight over to Fred's careful hands and trotted back to The Lariat.

It was dusk, and Bookie had lit the lamp. He came forward as the young man entered.

"Well, Hughie, welcome back!"

Hugh grasped the old man's hands.

"Uncle Bookie," he cried, "I've had a wonderful trip!"

"You cleaned out the cave, Hughie?"

"Yes, Uncle Bookie. You don't really mind, do you?"

Bookie looked into Hugh's eager face with a wistful earnestness, shrugged his shoulders slightly and said finally:

"Sit down and let me look at you. There is plenty of time before supper."

Hugh smiled, perched on the counter and proceeded to light his pipe. Then he returned the old man's gaze, the little smile of affection continuing to hover round his fine mouth. There was no face in the world that held quite the place in Hugh's heart that did Bookie's.

"How's business here, Uncle Bookie?" Hugh asked, after a moment.

"I've sold three or four books this winter," replied Bookie, with a little air of defiance.

"I dare you to name 'em," grinned Hugh.

"Oh, I sold 'em all right enough," insisted Bookie; "only, I get careless in my sales-records sometimes."

A ruddy man of sixty strolled in at the open door in time to hear this statement.

"What you need is a wife, Bookie," he snarled. He spat into the stove. "Some one to keep your accounts. Some one to make you shave every week whether you need it or not. Some one to keep tabs on your tobacco-money. Some one to hide your old boots on you. Some one——"

"Must have been trouble at the Indian Massacre, Pink," Bookie interrupted. "Aren't you going to say 'Hello!' to your son-in-law?"

"Hello, Hughie! Glad you're back. You can fight your own battles now."

"The trouble couldn't have been about me, Pink." Hugh shrugged derisively.

"Trouble!" snorted the landlord of the

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Indian Massacre Hotel. "It wasn't what you'd call trouble. It was the spring inventory of you and me, Kind of a round-up, and a thorough overhauling of the stock, including dehorning, delousing, vaccination and a forced sale."

"How did it end?" asked Bookie, not without a slightly anxious glance at Hugh.

"They sent me over to bring you two to supper. It all started when they see Hughie come along the street with another one of those damned loads of dead junk. The missis is all worked into a lather again."

"What did Jessie say?" asked Hugh.

"Mighty little, as far as that goes," replied Jessie's father. "It ain't so much what Jess says as what she doesn't that riles me."

Bookie dropped a chunk of soft coal in at the top of the heater, put the lid on carefully; then, looking from Hugh to Pink Morgan, he said in a tone of indescribable derision.

"Marriage!"

"I'd rather be an 'is' than a 'never-has-been,'" returned Pink. "At least Hugh and I had the nerve to undertake what you've always run from."

"Come on!" Hugh slipped from the counter. "Let's go to supper and be done with it."

PINK, with a groan, followed the two tall figures out of the store. The Indian Massacre, a ramshackle two-story frame building, was directly across the sandy street. The three stamped over the porch and in at the open door. The dining-room, containing a single long table, was at the left of the office. Mrs. Morgan was sitting behind the coffee-pot, but Hugh led his cohort firmly into the room.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Morgan," he said.

"Good-evening, Hughie. Jessie and I had given you up."

"I was making up for lost time with Uncle Bookie," returned Hugh, slipping into the seat farthest from his mother-in-law and helping himself to cold beef and fried potatoes.

Mrs. Morgan looked him over with a mingling of irritation and affection in her eyes—the irritation finally dominating. She was slender, with a small face that was pretty despite the thin firmness of her lips. Her hair was light brown and her eyes were light brown and her skin was lightly tanned as the skin of even the most careful Fort Sioux woman had to be. She had an eager, darting way of looking about her. There were fine, nervous lines about her thin lips, and her chin came to a sharp little point.

"Jessie hasn't seen you yet, has she?" asked Mrs. Morgan.

"I've only been home an hour," protested Hugh.

Bookie chuckled.

"Huh! First apology. You've gone up, Hughie. I've noticed that as long as you refuse to apologize to Mrs. Pink, she can't get a handhold. But you've made an awful break, boy."

"Right! She'll have you hog-tied in ten minutes, Hughie," grunted Pink.

Mrs. Morgan turned on her husband.

"There you go as usual! No sense of the fitness of things. Poor Jessie!"

"Poor Jessie—why?" asked Jessie suddenly, from the door.

She was what one likes the Western type of woman to be. Tall and strong, with fine shoulders and slim thighs. Strength in the splendid neck, and strength rather than beauty in the cleanly chiseled face. Perhaps in her perfect strength there was beauty. Who can say? At least her eyes were beautiful—eyes, blue, violet, gray, black, eyes with shadows in the corners, with humor in the lifting lids, with courage and daring in the direct and heart-searching focus of her listening gaze. Her hair was lovely, too. Blond masses of it wrapped about her head; yet it was the strength of Jessie that remained with you rather than her points of beauty. Hugh went over to the door and kissed her cheek.

"How are you, Jessie?" he asked.

"Very well, Hughie," she replied casually. "Why were you saying, 'Poor Jessie,' mother?"

"She's sorry you can't chew and swaller, same as old Bookie does," grunted Pink.

"There you go again, Pink Morgan!" cried his wife. "No sense of refinement or fitness!"

"Refinement!" ejaculated Pink. "I ain't got a refined hair in my head, and I'm proud of it. It's bad enough to be running the Indian Massacre. On the day some one accuses me of being refined, too, I'll get me a job on the old ranch, roping steers."

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Mrs. Morgan tossed her head.

"What I'm sorry for Jessie for is that she's got a husband without any ambition. Hugh is the smartest young man in the Fort Sioux country, and the nicest and best liked. And he's wasting his life being coroner on a lot of beasts that died the Lord knows when."

"Mrs. Morgan, I wish you wouldn't go into that again," exclaimed Hugh. "I tell you frankly that I'm sick of your nagging at me."

His mother-in-law, her cheeks flaming, leaned over the coffee-pot.

"There's a chance now for you to break into the Democratic party that will never come again. I want you to go to the legislature. I can have all the women's clubs of Wyoming back of you. I'm going to be next president of the State Federation, see if I'm not!"

Pink groaned, took a huge bite of pie and winked at Bookie. Jessie leaned indolently against the door-post, her eyes on Hugh. Bookie smiled grimly.

"Hughie," he said, "you might as well give in. The women in this state run the schools, run the politics and have got all the married men roped and hobbled. But I warn you now, Pink, that the day your wife becomes the governor of Wyoming, I'm going to move to Boston."

"She won't run for governor," declared Pink.

"What's to prevent her?" Bookie glanced derisively at Mrs. Morgan, who was darting quick glances from himself to her husband and to Hugh.

"In the first place, she'd have to have some men back of her, and she don't know how to handle men. In the second place, I'd shoot her and myself before I'd be the husband of a woman in office."

"It's a pity you quit riding herd, Pink. You were a man then," said Bookie.

Pink snorted indignantly.

"My God! You don't call a fellow that herds books for a living a regular man, do you?"

Hugh and Bookie burst into laughter. Jessie smiled, her eyes still on Hugh.

"Well!" ejaculated Mrs. Pink. "If you men have finished insulting me, I'll go on to say that I think Jessie is justified in taking any step—any—if Hugh keeps on refusing to do any of the things she wants him to do."

Hugh jumped to his feet.

"Jessie, once and for all I demand of you that you keep your mother out of our affairs."

"Well," returned Jessie slowly, "it's good some one takes an interest in our affairs. It's sure that you don't."

"I take an interest in my work. It was my work when you married me. A wife marries a man's work as well as she marries him. You've known me all my life. I've never had any interest in any line of work but paleontology—I never shall have. Unless you can be contented with my profession, you haven't a chance in the world to be contented with me. My work is me."

"You don't need to be so frightfully irritable about it, do you?" asked Jessie.

"I feel irritable. It's impossible for an easy-going person like you to understand how your attitude and your mother's irritates me. I want you both to let me alone."

And Hugh picked up his hat and went out. He slept that night in the sheep wagon in the railroad corral.

Fred gave him his breakfast the next morning, and shortly after eight o'clock Hugh strolled thoughtfully into the book store.

FORT SIOUX, of course, was no place for a book store. Everybody knows that a small town does not support a book shop comfortably, even in the East, and that the hopelessness of selling books in a small town increases as we move westward.

Bookie was fifty when he leased his outfit to an Eastern hotel man for a dude ranch and bought Pink Morgan's pool-room in Fort Sioux. Pink became landlord of the Indian Massacre Hotel.

There was a large window at either end of the pool-room. The roof was ceiled with metal stamped in a design of Cupids. Bookie made tall stack-bookcases with which to line the walls. There were rows of shelves in the store. When he brought down from the ranch his thousand volumes of what-not, the shelves swallowed them at a mouthful.

He placed a huge air-tight heater in the rear of the room, with a very large brass cuspidor in front of it. The cuspidor was distinctly an esthetic touch, for the cowman uses the stove when he uses anything. Near the front door he placed a small

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counter, with a large cash-register near the window-end. He put three or four comfortable wooden chairs round the stove and painted a sign on the front window:

THE LARIAT BOOK STORE
J. H. SMITH, PROP.

He then sent to Eastern publishers for their catalogues and opened the door for business.

HE HAD done all this the year he had sent Hugh to the university at Laramie. He had made an excellent cowboy of Hugh. He wanted him ultimately to be president of the United States. If there had been the office of president of the World, Bookie would have destined Hugh for that, with a complete conviction of his foster-nephew's fitness for the job.

Bookie was scowling over a dog-eared account-book when Hugh came in.

"I just can't find where I set down those sales," he said. "The dude trade'll be opening up soon, and I've got to know where I stand."

Hugh chuckled and perched on the counter, looking about the store with an air of humorous content. This was home.

"Uncle Bookie," he said, "I want to ask you, as one old-timer to another—did any one ever get up courage to use the brass cuspidor?"

Bookie gave the question careful consideration.

"I think once Johnny Parnell tried it when he thought I wasn't looking. I'm not sure, and I wouldn't want to accuse him wrongly."

Both men grinned and turned to look as the door opened and a gust of fine sand blew in, followed by old Red Wolf in overalls and a mackinaw. He returned Bookie's "How?" with a nod.

"What are you trading to-day, Red Wolf?" asked Bookie.

The Indian pulled a pair of moccasins from his pocket. Bookie gave the beaded foot-gear a cursory glance and shook his head.

"I've told you forty times, Red Wolf, I want the kind of beadwork the squaws learned from their grandmothers and not the kind the missionaries teach them."

"That's good. My girl made 'em," protested Red Wolf.

"I don't care who made it. She got chamois skin and beads at the ten-cent store in Cheyenne and a design off a Pullman carpet. I want buckskin and real Indian designs like the bucks wore when you and I were young. Rabbit-tracks in the snow, eagles flying. You know, Red Wolf."

"They won't make 'em," said the Indian dejectedly.

"Oh, go on and swap with him, Uncle Bookie!" exclaimed Hugh. "You're being artistic in restraint of trade."

His uncle smiled, took a fresh bite of plug and went over to a row of shop-worn books. He handed a copy of Keats' poems, bound in bright red, to the Indian. Red Wolf glanced eagerly through the pages, then shook his head.

"No good. No pictures," he said.

"There, you see, Hugh! He wants the same thing in books that I want in beadwork. Here—choose for yourself, Red Wolf."

The Indian moved to the shelf with alacrity. The door swung open again and a broad, ruddy young man clanked in. He wore a sombrero, short leather coat and Angora chaps. Silver spurs rang as he clanked down the room.

"Hello, Hughie Stewart!" he roared.

"Hello, Johnny Parnell!" returned Hughie.

"Say, Bookie, have you got a new Western story?" asked Johnny in a voice that could be heard at the top of the cañon.

"Yes. 'Roping 'Em.' On the shelf by the window. How's everything up at the ranch?"

"Much as usual. First bunch of dudes for the season coming in to-day!" Johnny groaned.

"Why don't you go to work at a regular job?" asked Bookie. "Why should a real cow-man like you want to make a living riding herd on a lot of dudes?"

Johnny groaned again.

"I often wonder that very thing myself, Bookie. Guess what I need to make a man of me is a wife. Couldn't locate one for me, could you, Bookie?"

"I might," admitted Bookie.

"Be sure you pick one that can earn her own living." Johnny grinned. "I can support myself, but only a little over. I've got to have one of these here new women. Not one of these lazy beauties, like Jess. I'll bet

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you pay a luxury tax on her—eh, Hughie?"

"Jessie is all right," said Hugh.

Johnny tossed him a quick look.

"You don't have to tell me that, Hughie. I knew it before you did. You're sure that's a Western story, Bookie? I don't read any other kind."

"Why not?" asked Bookie.

"Well, being foreman on a dude ranch like I am, I get homesick for real Western life. So as soon as the dudes begin to come in, I begin to load up on Western novels. And eve y once in a while I find a writer that don't mount his horse from the right side!"

His listeners laughed with him. Bookie wrapped the volume; the cash-register rang and Johnny clanked out. A moment later he flashed by the window on a rearing horse. Bookie watched a squaw herd a bunch of scraggly Indian ponies toward the railroad corral; then he sauntered back to the stove.

"Have you found anything you want, Red Wolf?" he asked.

The Indian, who was gazing delightedly into a large book which he had opened at a full-page illustration, grunted assent. It was a cheap and worn edition of Doré's "Inferno."

"Those pictures will make you squirm, all right," said Bookie.

The Indian nodded soberly.

"Show 'em to the squaws. Scare 'em to death." He buttoned the book under his mackinaw and went out softly.

"I'll be off again to-morrow or next day, Uncle Bookie. I've had a request from England for a brontosaur," said Hugh.

"Are you going to leave things up in the air with Jessie?" asked the older man.

"How can I do otherwise? She's too brainless to argue with."

Bookie shook his head.

"Jessie has a brain. She's lazy-minded—that's all. I didn't want you to marry her, I'll admit, but it wasn't that I had anything in particular against Jessie, as I've told you fifty times. A kid of twenty-two has no business to marry if he's a growing man. And you were that. The woman a chap like you will marry at twenty-two he wouldn't look at at thirty. Not that I'm knocking Jessie, either. She's got a lot to her, but you don't seem able to bring it out."

"Well, where does it all lead to?" asked Hugh impatiently.

The older man did not answer. He turned from watching Hugh to the window where, beyond the locomotive shops, rose the mighty red wall of the cañon, weathered and buttressed into shapes of exceeding strength and beauty. After his gaze had swept from base to summit, he turned and, diving under the shelf, brought up a slab of rock, which he slid carefully onto the counter. Hugh stared at it, then examined it minutely.

"By Jove! It might be the skin of a trachodon. Where did you get it, Uncle Bookie?"

"A young Sioux brought it in this winter. I swapped him an illustrated copy of 'Gulliver's Travels' for it. He wouldn't tell me where he found it. You'll have to get that information through old Red Wolf. All I hope is that it's near enough to Fort Sioux so you won't have to be gone long to dig it up."

Hugh, suddenly roused from his absorption in the fossil by a certain drop in the old man's voice, turned and repeated thoughtfully:

"You hope I won't have to be gone long to dig it up? Why do you say that?"

Bookie smiled, but did not reply.

HUGH took a turn or two up and down the room. Then he paused and put a long, sinewy brown hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Uncle Bookie, you're lonely."

"Well, supposing I am! Most people are, as I've said before. You are lonely yourself."

"No man is entirely lonely who loves his work as I do mine." Hugh still scrutinized the older man's brown eyes.

"I doubt if you love your dinosaurs any more than I do my books."

"Oh, books!" exclaimed Hugh in his gently modulated voice. "Books! Just paper and print—all of them! Me, I live with the giants. While you are conning old fairy-tales, I'm actually resurrecting the past. I'm making dead ages live again. I m a magician whose magic you can put your hand on and feel."

"Perhaps." Bookie smiled. "But I'm consorting with the great thinkers of all ages."

Hugh dropped his hand from his foster-uncle's shoulder and walked back to look

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at the river from the rear window. It was brimming its banks, but its overflow was done for the year. An air-plane dropped to the cañon floor west of the river.

"The mail is early to-day," said Bookie.

Hugh did not hear him.

"I have the feeling," he said, without turning from the window, "that I'm making a mighty poor return to you for all you've done for me. You supported me from the time I was ten until I finished college. I married against your wishes. You're dissatisfied with my profession. And it hurts me."

"A man has a right to chose his own work and his own wife," replied Bookie. "You'll have to put up with my growling. I'm like any other old hen with one chicken."

Hugh glanced at the cot back of the stove where Bookie slept.

"I think I'll move another cot in here, Uncle Bookie, and stay with you between trips."

The older man shook his head.

"It will just cause talk, and I'm not lonely that way. Mine's just the loneliness of one kind of old age—the loneliness of looking back at wasted years and forward to—nothing. You stay with Jessie." He paused and shook his head. "You young fellows of this generation are ruining your women. My generation of women was worth twenty of yours. We were all pioneers, and we expected the women to work as hard as we did. And they rose to the scratch. My God, they were wonders! Why, even Mrs. Morgan in her younger days up on the old Bar X did the work of three people. And even now, in spite of all her faults, she's a dray-horse for work. But this new generation of town women that you fellows keep in idleness—huh! You get about what you deserve for your softness."

"You'd better let me move in with you," repeated Hugh. "I have a feeling that you don't look well."

"Any man unlucky enough to survive the grub at the Indian Massacre for ten years has a right not to look well," retorted Bookie. "You stay with your wife. A generation ago you wouldn't have thought of leaving her. You'd have needed her work too much. Go on up and take a look at the new bone-ranch. I know you're honing for it."

Hugh, curiously enough, Bookie thought, went out reluctantly. Customers were even fewer than usual, if possible, that day, and the old man thought a great deal about himself and his boy.

EXCEPT for a general sense of disappointment that Hugh was not on the way to being the president of the United States, Bookie had no tangible reason for resenting the young man's choice of a life-work. He appreciated clearly enough the fascinations of paleontology, but he felt that in giving all his time to this work, Hugh was not giving the best that was in him. And Bookie had reached the time of life when he knew that ultimate satisfaction lies only in complete service. He knew, as he had tried to explain to Hugh at Christmas-time, that he was lonely because, when he could have made his book store a point for the dissemination of the something very fine, very necessary and deeply lacking in the great frontier state, he had been content to watch the panorama from his window and to saturate himself with the lore of other days. His loneliness was the loneliness of unfulfilment.

He always had been sure that, had he been able to persuade the young paleontologist to detach himself from the life of ages gone and to form contacts with the life of to-day, that somehow Hugh would build something large and serviceable from his talents. Bookie, in The Lariat, knew far more of Wyoming's problems than did Hugh on the wide plains, or did any other citizen of Fort Sioux except Mrs. Morgan. All of the state, sooner or later, drifted in and out of The Lariat. It was due to Bookie's own inertia that no one paused long enough to absorb the invaluable essence distilled by the books and by Bookie, himself.

Before the day was over, the old man regretted his refusal to allow Hugh to bring his cot to The Lariat. After all, wasn't his influence over the boy better than Jessie's? Might he not still win Hugh to something big if he could have the young man with him as in the old days on the ranch?

That evening, he began to make room in the rear of the store for Hugh's cot. The famous bookcases never had filled with books. But an accumulation of magazines during the years had packed the case at the rear from floor to ceiling. Bookie had an

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idea that if he set the great bookcase at right angles to the wall, letting it stand partitionwise as did the stacks in the library at Cheyenne, a natural screen, as it were, would be formed between his cot and Hugh's. He liked a certain amount of privacy in his old age, did Bookie, after a youth lived naked to the stars. So he grasped the shelves and pulled them free of the wall.

The next morning, Hugh, immediately after breakfast, fastened his horse before The Lariat and found the door locked. He grunted with surprise. Bookie had not been at the hotel for breakfast that morning. He put his hands round his eyes and peered through the window. One of the bookcases in the rear had fallen with its mass of magazines. Hugh seized his saddle-ax, broke the lock on the door and ran the length of the room. A lean old hand protruded from beneath the fallen book-stack.

"Uncle Bookie!" shouted Hugh, beginning to heave madly at the bundle of magazines.

There was no reply. But when he had cleaned the débris away, Hugh found that the old man was still breathing. He ran for help and returned with the doctor, Pink, Mrs. Morgan and Jessie. There was not much to be done. Internal hemorrhages. In an hour, Hugh was alone with the old man, still breathing faintly. The doctor had thought he would not waken, but he did.

All the golden May day Hugh sat beside the cot, his hand on Bookie's. Folk drifted softly in and out, none venturing to speak to Hugh after a glance at his face. At sunset, a sheep wagon, with canvas top flapping in the spring wind, wound down the distant corkscrew trail and made camp on the river-bank opposite The Lariat's rear window. Above the rush of the river, as the setting sun turned its troubled brown to bronze, rose the song of the Mexican sheep-herder:

Whither so swiftly flies the timid swallow?
  What distant bourne seeks the untiring wing?
To reach her nest, what needle does she follow
  When darkness wraps the poor wee storm-tossed thing?

Bookie's brown eyes opened slowly, and his gaze rested on the square of bronze light that the window-frame still outlined.

"Old Pablo making ready for the spring herding," he said. "Light the lamp, Hughie."

Hugh obeyed, and the wistful brown eyes followed the line of Hugh's noble head against the untrimmed wick.

"I was conscious for quite a while after the smash," he said, hardly above a whisper. "I was fixing up a bedroom for you. Sort of glad it was books finished me off after all. I always thought it would be Indian Massacre pies."

"Don't!" said Hugh tensely, his hand again seeking Bookie's.

"Don't feel too bad, my boy. After all, I've read all the books that are really filling. Give Red Wolf that old copy of 'Roderick Random.' He always wanted it. Likes the pictures. My will is in the bottom of the cash-register—" Bookie's voice trailed off. But Hugh knew that he hadn't finished. He seemed to be listening to the familiar lines of Pablo's song:

Here to my couch I'll call her,
  Why go so far dark and strange skies to seek?
Safe would she be; no evil should befall her,
  For I'm an exile, sad, too sad to weep.

And he opened his eyes again to say:

"I've heard him sing that every spring for ten years. Exiles. So we are. From what, Hughie? From our own best selves, perhaps. Don't make my mistake; for God's sake don't! Give all—all—all——"

Bookie's head jerked back on the pillow. He fought for a moment, face distorted, while death rattled in his throat, and he was gone, face serenely beautiful.

Hugh stood beside him, looking down at the sunken eyes.

"The best friend I'll ever have," he thought. "My only real friend. I'll never get over missing him."

After a moment he stopped the trembling of his lips by pressing his clenched fist against them and turned the light low. Then he went to the door and sent a passer-by for the undertaker.

THREE or four days later, Judge Proctor, who never had been a judge but was everybody's lawyer, met Hugh and the three Morgans at The Lariat to read the will. Bookie had written it himself about three weeks before.

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I want Hugh to have all that I possess. The ranch of five thousand acres and all the appurtenances thereto. And I want him to have the ten thousand acres of unimproved land between the ranch and the river, known as the Old Sioux Tract. And I want him to have The Lariat Book Store with all its appurtenances, some of which I herewith list:

First of all, the feeling of leisure brought by living in four walls that are lined with books.

Second, the calm feeling that comes when you know that everything you have thought or suffered has been thought and suffered before and set down in books that are under your roof.

Third, the voice of the river, which tells more than Homer ever dreamed.

Fourth, the pictures that every day pass the window of The Lariat.

Fifth, the solicitude for Wyoming which comes when you see the attitude of its citizens toward books and the understanding of these people which comes when you realize what they refuse to read.

All these with the ranch and the Old Sioux Tract go to Hugh, with one proviso: That from the date of my death for the period of two years, giving up the business of fossil-hunting, he devote himself entirely to running The Lariat. If he refuses to do this, I direct Judge Proctor, acting as my executor, to dispose of my entire property and turn the proceeds over to the Boston Public Library, the fund to be known by my mother's name, the Mary Haverford Smith Memorial.

THE will had been duly signed and witnessed. Judge Proctor read the signatures, then looked at Hugh. He was perched on the counter as usual, his face haggard from grief. Mrs. Morgan looked at him, too, glancing quickly from his somber eyes to the uneasy fingers that worked over his pipe-bowl. Jessie looked at him, her gorgeous hair like masses of rose-gold above her blue dress, with tired shadows dominating her gaze. And Pink looked at him, holding a piece of plug half-way to his lips. Hugh spoke slowly.

"Go ahead and sell the property, Judge. The dear old chap had no right to do that to me. He's even tried to bribe me with the Old Sioux Tract."

"No, Hugh! No!" cried Jessie suddenly. "Not such a quick decision. Sleep on it".

"Jess has a right to say something about your giving away a property like that!" exclaimed Pink.

Mrs. Morgan turned suddenly from Hugh to the lawyer.

"Isn't there some law to keep a man from making that kind of fool of himself, Judge?" she demanded.

Hugh was staring at Jessie with all the disillusion of his years of marriage in his eyes.

"I'll sleep on it, Jessie; but I warn you I can't be changed."

"You've got to be changed!" cried Mrs. Morgan, and she electrified them all by bursting into tears. She refused, at any one's more or less earnest solicitation, to explain the tears, and after a moment she rose and left the store.

"Hughie—" began Pink, drawing a long breath. Jessie interrupted him abruptly.

"Oh, you run along home, dad. You just add to the confusion."

Pink was seriously offended. He threw the perfectly good plug of tobacco violently out of the window.

"Of course," he said, "it's yours and Hughie's business. Come on, Judge; let's get out."

"I'll take the will along and send you back a copy, Hughie," said the judge. was the wisest man I ever knew."

"Take time to this, my boy. Old Bookie

Hugh did not reply. He remained leaning against the book-shelves, and Jessie sat facing him for a long time after they were left alone. Hugh had the feeling that everything that either of them had to say to the other on this or any other topic had long ago been said. He stood with his jaw set obstinately. And, after all, Jessie said something that she never had said before.

"Hughie, what is it you dislike about me?"

Her husband did not betray his surprise.

"I dislike your silly mind," he replied, with what must have seemed to Jessie insulting readiness.

But she did not even blink.

"Anything else, Hughie?"

"I dislike your using your physical charms on me to gain what you want."

"Anything else, Hughie?"

"No."

"How do you mean—'silly mind?' " The phrase was going to stick by her.

"Anybody born with a good brain that won't use it is silly-minded."

"Hughie, I have an idea that I need The Lariat as much as you do."

"Huh? So that's the game, is it?" ejaculated Hugh. He had been managed for years by Jessie, and every hostile instinct was constantly on the alert.

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Jessie ignored the thrust.

"I'd stay in the store with you, Hughie, and I'd read whatever you wanted me to."

"The tragic part of that is," returned Hugh, "that I don't care any more whether you read or not. Don't deceive yourself, Jessie. I can't be won back by intrigue. When a man loves his work as I do mine and his wife laughs at it, it's all he can do to keep from growing to hate her. You and your mother between you have done a sweet job of bronco-breaking on me."

"And aren't you at all to blame, Hughie?"

"I suppose I am"—fiercely—"but I don't care enough any more to study my own insides."

Jessie looked from Hugh to the open door, then turned on her heel and left The Lariat.

Hugh locked the door, opened the rear window, lit his pipe and began to pace the floor. And began to think. Twilight came on.

ONLY the man whose work fulfils the urgent desire of his mind and absorbs the best of his talents, whose work fits the peculiar needs of his temperament and appeals to every angle of his imagination can understand Hugh's love for the particular branch of geology which he had made his own, or appreciate fully the devastating nature of the demand in Bookie's will.

How could he, how could he cut himself off for two years from his all-engrossing pursuit, how could he refuse to heed that thrilling urge which even now tingled beneath his grief and bewilderment?

The fragment of fossil skin still lay on the counter beside the row of Western novels. Hugh traced its scaly surface with his fingers. Instantly his imagination closed the door on the wretched present, and the stone beneath his fingers became the armor-plate of a giant dinosaur striding on mighty hind legs along a sandy beach. He saw its terrible pointed teeth, its sharp, curved claws, its little pestilent head towering forty feet in the air. He saw similar beasts moving among the fernlike trees that bordered the beach. He beheld the sun glowing through the gentle mists and smelled the odors of vast waters and vaster vegetation.

He saw another dinosaur, fit mate in size to this, devouring the broken carcass of a vast turtle, saw the two great brutes meet in mortal conflict and heard the whir of mighty wings as lesser creatures fled the vicinity of the unthinkable battle.

And then his imagination leaped across countless ages, across the inconceivably slow movement of geologic time, past the imperceptible piling of sand grain on sand, the unnoted lap of waters on waters, of encroaching and receding seas, of lifting and of sinking mountains and the interminable coursing of the ageless winds. Across all these, in an instant, his vision leaped to the tiny figure of a man digging in the Old Sioux Tract to uncover the bones of two giant dinosaurs still locked in mortal combat, the broken carcass of the turtle still beneath their feet, the tracks of the fleeing lesser beasts still traced in the imperishable sands of that long-perished beach.

Hugh pushed the bit of fossil skin back beside the last Western novel and turned to the book-shelves. Row on row, the thoughts of the few men who had been able to express themselves in the little time that had elapsed since man replaced the dinosaur. "God!" thought Hugh. "What an exchange!" To take from him the work of uncovering the priceless manuscript of the ages and offer him in return the bartering of a book for a pair of moccasins!

Every fiber of his nature said, "No!"

Every fiber?

Slowly he made his way back to the open window and, pulling a chair before it, put his elbows on the window-sill, and with his eyes on the dim black rolling of the river, he fell to thinking of Bookie and of all that Bookie had been to him after his father and mother had died. How necessary the rancher had been to him then, and how completely Bookie had shared with the boy all that he had accumulated of wisdom and wealth! He had been a very, very wise man, and because this was so and because he had loved Bookie deeply and truly, Hugh never had felt fully justified in refusing to follow Bookie's plan for his career.

And, heavens, how weary he was of this constant sense of people's disapproval! Two years! Two whole years of his tiny, tiny span of life!

As for Jessie—no! Beyond decently supporting her, he acknowledged no sense

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of obligation there. He felt only a deep thankfulness that he had had his surfeit of sex and was through with it, and could turn his mind to his man's work unannoyed by its constant tease and urge.

Over the serene top of the black cañon wall surged the yellow moon. Across its mellow face moved a line of diminutive silhouetted horses. Some one was belated on the trail. Johnny Parnell, perhaps, bringing down a few mounts for such enterprising dudes as would wish to use the saddle on the ride to the ranch instead of the jitney.

There were lights on the cañon floor in the air-mail camp. The west-going mail must be late.

If you refuse to accede to a loved one's wishes while he lives, of what avail is it to accede to them after death?

Ah, but Bookie had wished it to be so. Two years! Bookie, after giving all that he had to Hugh for twenty-five years, asked in return two years, and he meant, Hugh knew, that these two years should be given to books and to Bookie's thought on them and on the people of Wyoming who passed the window of The Lariat. To exile himself for two years from his work! Exile! What a tragic word! "Exiles. So we are. From what—from what, Hugh? Don't make my mistake; for God's sake, don't. Give all—all—" What had the old man meant?

Hugh buried his face in his hands and for a moment retreated into that inner sanctuary of every man's soul whose walls are truth and whose altar is sacrifice—the sanctuary into which a man dares to retreat but once or twice in his life lest the clarity of vision wrought within it unbalance his will. When Hugh emerged, his hands were shaking and his eyes were contracted, but his decision was made. He would give the two years to Bookie.

A FRESH detachment of dudes arrived the next day. They all made the grand tour of Fort Sioux before starting for the ranch. They filed in and out of The Lariat; that is, all but one filed out. She paused to inspect the books on the counter. Behind the counter, Hugh leaned against the case filled with gaily bound books. He, no more than had Bookie, answered to the popular notion of a bookman. His corduroys, Norfolk and riding-breeches were worn and weather-stained. The spurs that jingled as he crossed his feet would seem more or less useless to a seller of books, and his restless, tired eyes were devoid of the contented introspectiveness of the true book-lover.

The strange woman looked from Hugh to the books on the counter and back again. He eyed her with keen and unwonted interest.

She was tall and slender and the most perfectly groomed woman that Hugh ever had seen. From the shining brown waves of hair over her ears to the shining vamps of her tan shoes she was flawless. Her delicate skin was without blemish; so were the lines of her regular, clean-cut features. Her eyebrows arched in two fine curves. Her mouth was exquisitely turned. She lifted clear hazel eyes to Hugh, her lips parting over the whitest teeth he ever had seen.

"I'm surprised," she said casually in an Eastern accent, "to find so many Western tales here."

"My uncle was told by the librarian at Cheyenne," replied Hugh, "that about seventy-five per cent. of the fiction called for up there was Western stuff."

"How naive!" exclaimed the visitor.

Hugh considered before he answered:

"The Westerners that I know are not naive. Anything but that. You've probably guessed wrong."

She arched the careful brows.

"What is the answer, then?"

"I haven't tried to think of one. I'm new at this game," replied Hugh, with his ingenuous smile.

"But you are a Westerner?"—quickly.

"Yes, ma'am. Bred and born in the sage-brush. My name is Hugh Stewart."

"Mine is Miriam Page. I'm going up to the Smith ranch." She was wondering at her own lack of reserve as she spoke, and told herself that she never had seen so noble a head as crowned this cowboy bookman.

"Then, Miss Page, you are a lady dude. And I'm sorry to tell you that you look the part."

"I'm sorry to tell you," retorted Miriam, "that you don't."

"Why not?" demanded Hugh quickly.

"Well, I suppose your clothes are a

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cowboy's. They are certainly not a book clerk's."

"They are the clothes of a maverick," sighed Hugh comically. "I expect eventually to go loco and be shot by a state inspector." Miriam's animated face quickened Hugh's interest as it would have quickened Bookie's. "If you're not a lady dude," he queried, a little hesitatingly, "would you mind telling me what you are?"

She smiled, showing her beautiful teeth again.

"When I'm at home, in Boston, I'm a business adviser in a bank. What are you when you're at home?"

"I'm a paleontologist," replied Hugh, with a sober, steady look at Miriam. "I wish you would sit down and talk. The outfit won't start for an hour, and you would just have to hang round the Indian Massacre."

Neither Miriam nor Hugh ever was to forget the slightest detail of that hour. It was Miriam's first visit to the West. It was her first meeting with a Western man. It was Hugh's first meeting with that ultra-new, ultrabrilliant, ultrasophisticated product of competition, the highly successful woman of business.

But it was far, far more than this for each of them, as each of them knew before the first half-hour had flown.

Miriam caught, with an almost physical sense of impact, Hugh's elusive personal charm. She sensed it at once behind his badinage, his wide, impersonal view-point, his eager, wistful looking beyond the walls, the sense of proportion that was a part of his whimsical humor, all his heritage from his life on the plains. And, most important to their friendship, she felt immediately and keenly his restlessness and his hunger. Here, she told herself, was an important man, far, far too important for The Lariat or Fort Sioux. Here, she told herself, was the man, fine, far-seeing, unconventional, full of promise, of whom she had dreamed all her life.

And Hugh—Hugh who had finished with sex forever—was meeting in Miriam that which he had not known a woman could possess—a mind long trained in competitive thinking with keen-thinking men, a mind with the suavity and complexity of a widely experienced man's. Coupled with this, a physical presence, the very distilled essence of the feminine, with manner and method that never swerved by a hair's breadth from the feminine. Hugh was disturbed, bewildered, fascinated. Hugh, who had done with sex, was meeting sex-attraction in one of its most subtle, most intoxicating forms.

They talked rapidly of many things in this first fine, free meeting of spirits, and there is nothing finer than such a meeting or more rare. They said much and they felt more. But both of their faces were masklike when they turned them toward Jessie, sauntering in at the open door—carefully masklike on Hugh's part, as Jessie saw at once.

"Hello!" she said casually. "I think you must be the Miss Page Johnny Parnell is looking for. The outfit is ready to start."

"Yes; I'm Miss Page." Miriam rose. "I had not realized that it was so late."

"Miss Page," said Hugh, still without expression, "this is my wife."

"I suppose, Mrs. Stewart," said Miriam, "that if you were going out to this ranch, you'd go horseback. I wish I were enough of a horsewoman to do it."

"No, I wouldn't," returned Jessie, with her usual pleasant casualness. "I prefer a car to a horse for a long ride. Any one would."

Johnny Parnell put his head in the door.

"Waiting for you, Miss Page!"

"Good-by!" cried Miriam, following quickly after Johnny.

Jessie turned to Hugh.

"She's as old as you, and she powders, rouges and plucks her eyebrows."

"Is that so?" returned Hugh indifferently.

"How long was she here?"

"Quite some time." Then he added clearly, "She has a fine mind."

"Is that so?" countered Jessie indifferently.

Then they stared at each other with a whole lost world of disillusioned youth in their eyes and with open defiance and with fearful determination.

IT WAS Hugh who broke the silence.

"Leave me alone, Jessie," he said. "You and your mother needn't worry over me for two years. I'm staked out. All I ask of you is that you leave me alone."

Jessie's broad shoulders lifted slightly. But she still spoke casually.

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"Don't!" said Hugh tensely, his hand again seeking Bookie's. "Don't feel too bad, my boy. My will is in the bottom of the cash-register —" Bookie's voice trailed off.

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"You mean, Hughie, that you don't want me to come into The Lariat at all?"

"No; I don't mean that. Come and go as you will, but leave me alone. What little work there is here I'll attend to. But don't dream for a minute that this will of Uncle Bookie's is going to change me. When the two years are over, I'm going back to my work."

"What am I to do during that time?" she asked, without for a moment losing her look of indolence.

"What you've always done. Nothing."

"Nothing?"

In sudden desperation, Hugh cried,

"For heaven's sake, Jess, get yourself a job somewhere!"

"You mean you want me to support myself?" The indolence was replaced now by a voice of incredulous shock.

"I mean that I want you to put your mind on something besides me." Hugh's irritation made his voice harsh.

"Oh, business-woman stuff!" ejaculated Jessie. "That woman who was just in here! It didn't take her long."

Hugh scowled; then he said slowly and in a low voice, thinking aloud:

"We can't keep this up. What's the use? The one chance in the world that we have is for you to get an interest in something besides me and my failings—the one chance. I'm not going to stay all my life close to a brain and a body that won't work. Why should I? Why should my little, unimportant span of life be so devilish painful? Why shouldn't I have a kind of freedom—I mean freedom to think and work as I please? I'm going to have that freedom, Jessie."

Hugh was not looking at his wife. He was staring out the window on the blinding yellow light that danced over the sandy street. And the sense of that infinity of time from which he was borrowing for his little existence was strong upon him. Frightful, he told himself, that anything so unimportant should loom to him so all-important!

Jessie slowly drew herself to her full height. The muscles of her throat worked for a moment and a curious look of power and aggression showed in her eyes. But she left the store without speaking.

About an hour later, Hugh saw young Magpie, Jessie's black horse, pawing up the sand before the door of the Indian Massacre. A moment after, Jessie ran down the steps of the hotel in khaki and leaped into the saddle. Magpie was off before her right foot had found the stirrup. Pink lounged across the street and squatted in the doorway of The Lariat.

"Jess sure has gone loco. What do you suppose she's at this time? She telephoned out to the dude ranch and got Johnny Parnell to give her a job as lady guide. She's already took on that Page woman for lessons."

Hugh slowly laid down a book while his mind took in Jessie's plan. She was going out to the dude ranch to heckle Miriam Page, to insult her with her magnificent strength, as only Jessie could, to break off that sudden and overpowering attraction which he and Miriam felt for each other. Irritation flamed into violent protest. It should not be.

"Mind the store for me, Pink!" he exclaimed, as he rushed out of the door to the hotel corral.

NOT five minutes later he thundered across the bridge on Fossil. Jessie already had reached the foot of the corkscrew trail. He thrust the spurs into Fossil's flanks.

Jessie was half-way up the cañon wall when Hugh, setting Fossil to the first upgrade, shouted to her,

"Wait for me, Jessie!"

"I can't hold Magpie on this grade. He's too fresh."

"Then wait for me at the top."

There was a moment's silence; then, amid a rattle of small stones, Jessie's voice floated down to him.

"I will!"

She was sitting carelessly astride her mount when Fossil panted up the last turn, a lazy half-smile on her lips but her eyes defiant. Hugh pulled his horse in, head to head with Magpie.

"What's the idea of your undertaking to teach Miss Page to ride?"

"My first job. It's all I know—riding." She grinned.

"I don't like it," said Hugh. "It's too obvious. You'd better give it up and try something else."

Jessie watched a jack-rabbit lope slowly across the road.

"You're too late, Hughie," she said.

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"Of course it's not too late! Don't try to bluff me, Jessie. I know exactly what your idea is, and I won't have it!"

"Won't have what?" asked Jessie, lazily examining her left spur.

"I won't have Miss Page annoyed."

"You sure do flatter me," murmured Jessie. "Anything else you want right now, while I'm in my usual genial mood?"

"You're not a genial person," said Hugh. "You are just lazy. There's a big difference."

Jessie lifted her head and stared at her husband, and slowly the look of easy grace left her as though a veil had dropped, showing her in broad lines of strength and determination.

"No; I'm not genial, Hughie," she returned finally; "not any more. You don't understand me yet, though. I've been ambitious for you. That's done with. Now I'm ambitious for myself."

"I'm glad to hear it. I want you to be ambitious for yourself. I'll help you any way I can."

"Oh, no, you won't—not with this particular ambition, not after you understand what it is."

Hugh's tired eyes returned Jessie's defiant gaze irritably.

"What is it you plan for yourself?" he demanded. "Why don't you speak plainly."

"I told you you didn't understand me. You're fine stuff, Hughie, with a splendid mind and a charming personality. But you're selfish."

"Perhaps I am. But what are you?"

Both were speaking in hushed voices of indescribable bitterness.

"I've been selfish and lazy, too. But that isn't all there is to me, Hughie. I'm strong, and I'm a great lover, Hughie—a great lover."

Hugh lifted his fine head.

"And do you think," he exclaimed, "that all there is to me is that sort of love a young man gives when he's mating? Faugh! Somewhere in me there is possible a love that you couldn't appreciate."

"And yet," said Jessie, "you have told me a hundred times that you are through with love. Careful, Hughie! You don't know me. Me—I can fight for my own."

"And so can I," returned her husband.

"Get me clearly, Hughie: I shall never let her have you."

"And get me clearly, Jessie: Life is short, and I intend to live it as I will."

"We'll see!" exclaimed Jessie, roweling Magpie suddenly onto the trail.

Hugh watched her grimly for a moment; then, with his jaws showing white under his ears, he turned his horse homeward.

THE next morning Hugh began an inventory of the stock of The Lariat. Fred Allward came in as he was listing a set of the "Elsie" books.

"What are you doing, Hughie?" he demanded.

"Who? Me? Why, I'm out prospecting the Old Sioux Tract," grunted Hugh, replacing "Elsie's Holidays" with a vicious shove of his long, muscular hand.

"So I see. Judge was telling me about your having to do assessment work for two years. Think the claims are worth it?"

He leaned against the counter, watching Hugh set down: "1 Copy, 'Elsie's Holidays,'" in a small, copperplate hand. Fred never ceased to find delight in the meticulous accuracy and care which marked all that Hugh did.

Hugh looked up from the account-book.

"Do you think the claims are worth it, Fred?"

The older man pulled at the ubiquitous piece of plug.

"Well," he said carefully, "I opine that the Old Sioux Tract is going to be rich prospecting in your line for a good many years. The dude ranch is one of the best in this section, whether it's worked for dudes or four-legged critters. But this here book store ain't worth taxes. I can't see just what you'd want with it."

Hugh began to fill his pipe slowly. Fred watched him keenly, so keenly that he forgot to chew or swallow, and a thin thread of tobacco juice made its way unheeded from the corner of his mouth into his beard. After a time he sighed.

"Well, Hughie, what do you expect me to do while you take two years' rest? Read this what do you call it—'Elsie's Holidays'?"

Hugh smiled.

"You go up and prospect the Old Sioux Tract. But don't come in here with reports of your findings. It will just upset me. Keep a good record. Two years will pass

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eventually, and I'll make up for lost time then."

"How about shipping out old Red Wolf's stone devil?" asked Fred.

"Can't be done under the terms of the will, Judge Proctor says."

"My God, Hughie, you are a fool!"

Hugh shrugged his shoulders, and there was another silence broken when Fred said, "Hughie, you won't last a month at this," peering over his employer's shoulder as he set down concisely in the blank book:

1 Copy "Science and Health"—Eddy.
1 Copy "Darkest Africa"—Stanley.
1 Copy "Wind in the Willows"—Graham.

Fred gave a violent snort and clanked out of the store.

Pink was the next visitor. He appeared an hour later, when Hugh was varying the monotony of the book inventory by listing curios.

1 horsehair hackamore, black, very fine.
1 Indian blanket, Chemhuivi.

"I wonder how a Chemhuivi blanket got up here, Pink," observed Hugh. "Look! It's indigo and natural gray. The Chemhuivis are extinct. This thing is valuable."

"Mark Olsen hocked that with Bookie last summer." Pink spat thoughtfully and accurately into the middle of the street. "You remember his wife was a half-breed Navajo. He hocked that for money to bury her with. It was when you was up in the Jackson Hole country."

Hugh nodded and wrote on:

1 pair spurs, silver and turquoise. No leathers.
1 Hualapai water-bottle, horsehair and pitch.

"Found that water-bottle up in the same cave where you found the petrified turtle, didn't you?" asked Pink.

"Yes. Not that one had anything to do with the other," answered Hugh.

"I don't see why not. There must 'ave been a point somewhere in them old days when the humans and the critters began to overlap."

Pink's voice was argumentative. He rose from the door-step and came over to examine the dusty black water-carrier.

"Well, I'll tell you what I think." Hugh lit his pipe, the irked look leaving his eyes. The two men sank into chairs and put their feet on the top of the stove. "It was probably like this—" began Hugh.

"Wait a minute," grunted Pink. "Hell's a-popping again."

Mrs. Morgan darted in at the door.

"Pink, you promised me you'd be ready to drive me round town promptly at ten."

"No, I didn't. I told you I'd have the car ready at ten. You drive yourself."

"Pink Morgan, you've got to drive me! I'm going to every house in this town and find out exactly what they're doing with their garbage and their corrals. I tell you this fly nuisance is going to stop in Fort Sioux."

"I'm not going. Anyhow, Hughie and I are having a business conference. And, anyhow, why the car? You can hoof it to every house in Fort Sioux in an hour."

"I want the car. I'm going with some dignity."

Pink glared at his wife helplessly. She was so small, so persistent, so full of schemes and plans. It was the schemes and plans that always routed and finally dominated Pink. He was born to a planless scheme of life. He was a congenital herdsman, a rider of the plains where time and urgency do not exist.

"I'm waiting, Pink," said Mrs. Morgan.

Pink muttered something under his breath, rose slowly and, without looking at Hugh, followed his wife out of The Lariat. A moment later, a brisk fusillade rattled the windows, and Hugh chuckled as he watched the little car plow forward through the sand, Pink in shirt-sleeves at the wheel, Mrs. Morgan sitting in the middle of the rear seat, her small back as straight and rigid as her tightly compressed lips.

"But they can't do it to me," he said aloud, as he went back to his inventory. "Neither she nor Jessie can break me to the side-saddle."

IT WAS a fortnight before Hugh heard from Jessie, and then only through Johnny Parnell. That resplendent cowman, waiting for the Salt Lake train to arrive, lounged from the barber shop to the Indian Massacre and from the Indian Massacre to the Lariat.

"That there Miss Page," he said, "wanted I should pick her up a pair of spurs. I

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guess she's planning to beat Jess in an outfit."

Hugh felt his pulses quicken, but he laid down a Smithsonian *Bulletin* slowly.

"How's that?" he asked.

"Well, we supply all the dudes with spurs if they want 'em. Miss Page had our usual brand, but when she saw Jessie gouging Magpie with those blue-enamel Mexicans of hers, she got an altogether new ideal of horsemanship, I guess. Anyhow, she asked me to stop by here and negotiate a flossy pair from you."

"That turquoise pair has no leathers," said Hugh.

"Oh, I can produce the leathers," drawled Johnny. "How much? Four bits?"

Hugh laughed.

"Take them to her with my compliments."

"Don't you do it! She's rolling in money. She owns a bank or something back in Boston. Jessie says she's the self-and-husband-supporting woman I've been looking for all these terrible years."

Johnny pushed his sombrero to the back of his head and, with a flash of his beautiful teeth, offered Hugh a cigarette.

Hugh lit the cigarette and proceeded to wrap the spurs.

"I suppose Jess is putting Magpie through her paces."

"Uh-huh. She's made more of a hit than all the he guides put together. All the men want to take riding lessons, but so far she's run this Miss Page as favorite. Women being queer!"

" 'Queer' is the word," agreed Hugh. "Here are the spurs. There is no charge. Tell Miss Page I'll hope to see her wear them soon."

"Thanks. She's some woman! An old hand at handling men. Not a flirt, you understand. Oh, no! Something finished about her method that I can't sabe. Now, Jessie—bless her!—you always know exactly what she's doing to you and that she's too lazy to do very much. But not this other one! Me—I prefer Jessie. But not knocking Miss Page. It's just that, after being brought up to the standard-breds, you wouldn't know exactly how to go about gentling an Arabian. And that's not knocking Jessie, either. You know how I stand about Jess. I've never made any bones of it."

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Hugh nodded, and after Johnny had jingled out he looked after him wistfully, recalling the mad days when he had believed life would not be worth living unless he bested young Johnny in the race to marry Jessie Morgan. Then he laughed aloud. Jessie! A job as guide to Miriam Page! And after he had laughed aloud he twisted his long brown hands together in a gesture that was expressive at once of pain and of consternation. Life, so brief, and his control of its direction so uncertain! He did not return at once to his reading, but fell to pacing the floor.

The days were increasingly difficult. He had lived a life of great physical activity, for which the pacing of the floor of The Lariat was a poor exchange. He had given up a star-hung sky for dingy Cupids traced on a fly-specked ceiling. He had bartered the glory of the plains for books in tawdry bindings. Something, some one must compensate for the loss, or he could not endure it.

BILLY CHAMBERLAIN, the barber, interrupted his half-savage meditation. Billy was smooth-shaven and thin, with a fringe of sandy hair surrounding a shining bald spot. His eyes were brown and slightly protuberant.

"Listen, Hughie," he said; "I want to look up something in the dictionary. I'll never get Pink Morgan out of the chair till I do."

"What's the trouble?" asked Hugh, nodding toward the shabby "Webster."

"Pink says petrified wood ain't wood. He sets up to know a lot because you're his son-in-law. He and Principal Jones has argued for an hour, and I'm sick of it. A school-teacher is always long-winded, and Pink is as hard to run down as a coyote. And Pink says one of those damn birds you shipped out of here last summer wasn't a bird but a lizard. And I've been arguing with him about that. Would I find it under 'bird' or 'lizard?' "

"Under neither." Hugh's eyes were twinkling. "Here! I think I can find an exact statement in this."

He opened a bulletin he had been reading just as Pink, one side of his face white with lather, stamped in, followed by Principal Jones, a tall old man with a shock of white hair.

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"Am I going to be shaved or ain't I?" demanded Pink furiously.

"Nobody could shave you with your jaw wagging like a dog's tail," retorted Chamberlain. "I'm over here trying to get some facts to stop it with."

"Hughie," demanded Pink, "wasn't that last critter you brought in before Bookie died a lizard?"

"It was a prehistoric bird, you fool!" shouted Principal Jones in a voice of entire exasperation.

"Wait a moment, you fellows! Wait a moment!" exclaimed Hugh. "I'll tell you the story of that little dinosaur, and then you'll understand what you're arguing about."

HE LEANED against the counter, half turned from the door to stare out the window at the air-camp into which a white-winged plane was settling home. His voice was low and curiously persuasive. He was conscious of a keen desire to make these old friends of his see the picture as he saw it. So great was his concentration that he did not heed the glances of interest directed by his three hearers toward the door as Miriam Page entered, nor did he note their little grins of amusement as she motioned to them for silence.

"In the long ago, old-timers," said Hugh, "there was a lake stretching like a sea over these plains from half-way up the Baldies to the peaks of the White Wolves. And the reason that we know this is so is because the story of it is written imperishably on the walls of the mountains. And the hieroglyphics in which the story is written are there."

One after another, he interpreted the familiar landmarks about them. Mountains became tropic islands. Mesas became crescent sea-beaches. The desert turned to uncanny jungles through which thronged the monsters of a long-dead world.

Miriam leaned against the door-post, her gaze intent on the back of Hugh's head. Billy Chamberlain now and again swallowed, with his jaws half opened. Principal Jones, with head craned forward, blinked and nodded as he did whenever a pupil acquitted himself shockingly well. Pink breathed heavily through his nose, forgetting to watch Miriam.

"And that"—Hugh completed his tale—"is how the little dinosaur was saved from the ages for France."

"Say, Hughie," said Billy Chamberlain; "it's a shame to waste good thunder like that on stones. Do you know, you could persuade a hydrophobia skunk to think he was a canary-bird. It ain't that you're such a good talker, either. It's your way."

Pink cleared his throat.

"Are you ever going to shave me, Billy?"

"Come on! Come on! I hope you can keep your jaw quiet, now you've been showed up wrong."

Hugh turned, smiling, as the two belligerents strode toward the door, to discover Miriam, her eyes still intent upon him. She came slowly toward him.

"I came to shop," she said, "and I stayed to"—she hesitated—"I stayed—to beg."

Hugh took her outstretched hand,

"To beg?" he repeated, a little awkwardly.

"Yes," said Miriam; "that you would not waste your gift."

"You mean my work?" exclaimed Hugh, with eager satisfaction. "I knew you'd understand."

"Not your work. I don't know much about that as yet. Your gift is the priceless gift of personality—something vivid and fine that people get quite without your willing it to be so."

Hugh was feeling more and more collapsed. He looked at Miriam with the old expression of baffled weariness. Principal Jones cleared his throat. Neither Miriam nor Hugh heard him. He looked from one to the other with keen scrutiny, waited a moment in the unembarrassed silence, then, quite unheeded, tiptoed out of the shop.

"Don't look at me so!" exclaimed Miriam. "I do understand you—better than you understand yourself."

Hugh shook his head with a little smile.

"There is so little to understand about me that you're not complimenting yourself. You look tired. How did you come in?"

"On old Lemon Skin. My first long ride. Your wife says that a month from now I can ride what she calls a real horse."

"Jessie knows," said Hugh, then added quietly, "Did she come in with you?"

"No. I just started off on my own early this morning, and—decided to buy new spurs."

"I sent my best pair to you this morning

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by Johnny Parnell. He must be over at the station. Have you had your dinner?"

It was not the sort of conversation he had planned with Miriam. He looked at her appealingly. She seated herself casually in one of the chairs beside the stove.

"I'll get some lunch when I've cooled down from the ride," she said. "Perhaps you'll let me rest here."

"Perhaps I will," agreed Hugh, with a smile.

"Has it been a long two weeks—I mean the weeks of shopkeeping?"

HUGH took the chair opposite Miriam's. He did not answer her for a moment. How we waste time with words, he was thinking. He cared for her, cared for her very much. He wanted her passionately to understand him. And he was making talk about food and time. Miriam waited patiently.

"It has been a week of hades," said Hugh finally.

"Just why?" She was not smiling, but her eyes were very bright.

"Because of you," he replied bluntly, "and because of The Lariat."

There was a silence, broken by the thudding of hoofs in sand as a herd of lean steers was rushed past the window by a shouting rider.

"Let's talk about the will first," said Miriam gently. "Is it your intention not to leave The Lariat except for meals and sleep?" She was smiling now.

Hugh returned the smile.

"I don't know whether I could trust myself as far as the barber shop or not. Why do you ask?"

"Because I'm interested in the will. It was cruel, and yet it showed a big understanding of you. You realize, of course, that all people talk of round here is the will and the Frontier day's celebration." Hugh groaned and Miriam laughed. "Are you going to be able to stick it?" she asked. "It's a wonderful property."

A wonderful property! He, then, to her was enduring this barren exile that he might own the ranch and the Old Sioux Tract. And she had said that she understood him!

"Look!" he said suddenly, leaning toward her, his long face flushed beneath its tan. "We can't go on unless you feel as I do about it all."

"Tell me how you feel about it"—the smile leaving her eyes.

Hugh rose to lean against the counter, and slowly began to unpack his heart to her. He told her of his childhood, of Bookie, of the slow growth of his feeling toward his profession, of his marriage, of Jessie, of Mrs. Morgan. He told her of his toil to open up the buried manuscripts of unstoried time. And he told her of Bookie's death. And, last of all, he told her of his titanic mental struggle over the will and what the sacrifice meant to him.

When he had finished, Miriam's eyes were tear-blinded.

"It is so difficult to be impartial in judging you," she said ruefully. "What you are dominates one so that one forgets what you ought to be. Why does your wife want you to go into politics?"

"In a frontier state, politics is the most obvious way out of primitive living and isolation into positions of power and ease."

Miriam nodded. Then she said slowly:

"It's very wonderful to love one's work as you do. I'd almost say it was the greatest gift the gods can bestow. But such love should lead somewhere."

"I don't see why it should lead anywhere but to itself." Hugh was watching Miriam with painful intensity.

"It ought to lead at least to the world's sharing more in your work, particularly in your interpretation of it. I wish so much —" She hesitated.

"What is it you wish?" asked Hugh gently.

"I wish I could see you at work. Then I'd understand still better."

"And you want to understand?" Hugh leaned toward her eagerly.

Miriam looked up steadily into his eyes.

"I must understand." Her voice was tense.

Hugh drew a deep breath and paced the floor for a moment. Then he said:

"I must and I will keep my word to Uncle Bookie. But I can show you where I have worked if you have time and are fairly good at climbing. I know you are athletic; but do heights make you dizzy?"

"No. I've done a little climbing in the Alps—enough to prove that."

"Oh! Then this will be easy." He looked at her attentively. How lovely, how very lovely she was! All the charm that was

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peculiarly Hugh's was in his face as he took both Miriam's hands in his.

"You know, Miriam? You know?" he whispered.

"Yes." Her lips quivered.

Hugh dropped her hands and started slowly toward the door, then turned back to say:

"I'm going to arrange with Pink Morgan to stay in The Lariat till I come back. You and I are going to go in the launch up the river to a cave I want you to see. I can get you back by dark, but you'd better plan to stay at the Indian Massacre to-night."

Miriam nodded, and Hugh returned shortly with his father-in-law, who agreed most willingly to keep shop. Any engagement that relieved Pink of his wife and the hotel was entirely satisfactory. Miriam's horse having been unsaddled and turned into the corral, the expedition was launched without delay.

THE little launch in which Hugh had done so much river-prospecting had been lying forlornly behind The Lariat since Bookie's death. Miriam sat beside Hugh, intently following his vivid interpretation of the broad level floor of the cañon, the crimson, tortured walls of the cañon. They left the little town behind, passed the excavation which scarred the spot from which Hugh had unearthed a fine collection of fossilized bones, passed the crude camp of an oil-prospector, passed a group of Sioux squaws tramping southward with bundles of babies and beadwork.

It was not until they had passed the last trace of humanity that Hugh ceased to speak of his work. But when the trudging squaws had disappeared, he laid his free hand on Miriam's and said abruptly:

"It's been fearfully swift, hasn't it? I would have laughed had any one told me, even two months ago, that it could have come to me so. Yet it is right that it should come to us swiftly. Life is so short. We are no longer youngsters, and we have no time to waste."

A slow flush showed through the delicate tan of Miriam's cheeks. After a moment, during which her lower lip quivered, she answered,

"Yes; we have no time to waste."

"I am very happy," Hugh said slowly.

Then they sat in a silence that was unbroken until Hugh brought the launch into a pool that lay behind a giant butte. They did not disembark at once, but sat for a moment after Hugh had snubbed the boat to a convenient boulder, contemplating the beauty of the scene.

The rushing waters, blue as the sky, blue as deep sapphire, trembled and roared just beyond the quiet blue pool in which the little launch lay motionless. From a massive nest of sticks, far, far above, an eagle looked down on the quiet figures in the boat.

"There is Jessie to be considered," said Miriam suddenly.

"Yes," returned Hugh coolly; "I shall consider her. But not to-day, nor while you are in Wyoming. Jessie has had her chance with me for a good many years. She never could understand that my work is me. She didn't want to understand. As a matter of fact, she doesn't love me at all."

"I believe that Johnny Parnell cares a great deal about Jessie, and it seems to me she could easily care about him," suggested Miriam.

Hugh nodded absently. Jessie had long since ceased to trouble or interest any but the outer surface of his existence. He was gazing now at the new-made trail that etched the cañon wall beyond the butte.

"We made that trail this spring," said Hugh. "It's very rough, but you can climb it. I'll tell you about the cave to which it leads before we start."

He told the story of the finding of the triceratops, failing, however, to speak of Jimmy Duncan or old Bookie's connection with the cave. This finished, they began the slow ascent. Miriam was breathless when they reached the opening. Hugh unfastened the crude door with which he had sealed the entrance and seated Miriam on a packing-case while he lighted a number of candles and placed them at the rear of the cavern which the afternoon light failed to reach. When he came back to Miriam, she was staring at the heap of skeletons with unmitigated horror. She clutched his arm as he sat down beside her.

"Hugh, don't stir an inch away from me!" she gasped.

He laughed and clasped her fingers.

"You little goose! Listen to me, and I'll make you feel differently about it.

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First, look at that excavation above the candles while I tell you the story of Red Wolf's stone devil-beast."

Slowly before Miriam's fascinated gaze there appeared at the rear of the cave a monster of forgotten time, a three-horned brute, with vast wallowing body and a jointed tail that swept dragonlike behind the elephantine legs. And above the monster, crouched threateningly in mighty herbage, flew dragon-flies, huge as the eagle in its nest in the butte-side, and more horrible, more beautiful. Strange cries, strange scents, strange colors and a loneliness more profound than savagery. Miriam suddenly glimpsed a vista of earth's history that was mind-shattering in its immensity. She knew now with appalling clarity what Hugh felt when he said that their little lives were too short. She knew now what it meant to this man to draw the curtain aside from this unending, unthinkable vista. She knew now how painfully, with what imperceptible slowness that curtain must be drawn, what passion of interest and loyalty that drawing demanded from the men who gave their lives to it. And yet she could not endure the thought that such imagination, such loyalty, such vividness of perception should be given by Hugh to so remote a profession.

And as she sat beside him in the silence that followed his tale of the triceratops, Miriam's resolve was taken. Neither paleontology nor Jessie were to claim him longer. He was to belong to her and to that larger place in the world to which his talents and his personality entitled him. But she was far too clever a woman to discuss this thought with Hugh.

She broke the silence with a little sigh.

"I see it, Hugh, as I had not seen it before. What enormous labor, my dear—what patience and what fascination! It is wonderful work."

Hugh laughed delightedly.

"I knew you'd get it. Forgot all about the piffling little Indian Massacre at our feet, didn't you?"

"It has no place in your huge canvas," said Miriam.

"That's it!" exclaimed Hugh, rising. "You are shivering, Miriam. We will get back to the launch. Some day"—he paused, and, putting his hand beneath her chin, turned her face toward his—"some day—please God!—we'll see some of this work through together—shall we not, Miriam?"

She nodded slowly. Hugh drew a long breath.

"Oh, you can't imagine," he exclaimed, "what your understanding means to me! It makes it possible for me to endure my exile in The Lariat."

"I don't believe you are going to find that exile half as stupid as you anticipate it will be," said Miriam.

"Thanks to you, I won't!" Hugh laughed and led her out to the trail.

They were in the launch and well out into the river when he said, with something of the old wistfulness in his eyes:

"Well, we've snatched one perfect moment from eternity, anyhow. The beauty of it ought to hallow that old cave long after you and I are forgotten dust."

"I'll be forgotten," returned Miriam; "but you are never going to be if I can help it."

"What are you going to do? Have my bones fossilized?" chuckled Hugh.

Miriam shook her head. It was after a long silence that she said:

"Hugh, promise me that, no matter what comes, nothing ever will shake your faith in me and in my caring for you. Remember, no matter what is said or done, my love for you is a perfect and a holy thing. You never must distrust it. Promise me, Hugh!"

"I promise you, Miriam," said Hugh, his low voice hardly audible above the rushing river.

IT WAS sunset when they tied to the bank of the river behind The Lariat, and Miriam went at once to the Indian Massacre. There was still an hour before supper, and Pink, relieved of duty in the book store, undertook to provide entertainment for this solitary guest.

"This is the most wonderful country in the world," he said. "But you can't get these folks in Fort Sioux to realize it. They don't see nothing but mining and ranching."

"What else could there be here?" asked Miriam, looking up from the ancient magazine she had found on the hotel counter.

"Lots of things. For example, there's enough water-power in that river to electrify half of Wyoming. I've talked it for ten years. Do you suppose I can get anybody

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with money to listen to me? No! All they can talk is cattle and oil."

Pink chewed bitterly for a moment; then the big idea of his life flashed into his mind. He got up from his chair near the stove and crossed to Miriam, seated before the window.

"Say—I hear," he began eagerly and confidentially, "that you are a banker. That means that you are next to big sums of money."

"It might mean so," agreed Miriam cautiously.

"Folks round here," Pink went on, "look on me as a kind of a camp-follower for my wife. She runs this town, and she runs me. But she hasn't robbed me of the power to think—not yet, I mean. And I've got one idea that, if I can put it over, will make me the biggest man in Wyoming. And if you'll help me, we sure can put it over."

"What's the idea?" asked Miriam.

"Just what I've told you. Water-power. Two or three different surveyors at different times have told me that a dam a few miles up the cañon from Fort Sioux would be a world-wonder for the power it would produce. They'd put the dam at that butte where Hughie's made the new trail."

"Your ideas are rather expensive, aren't they?" Miriam smiled.

"Expensive? Yes. Gosh! Think of the bigness of it! Why, the waters would back up clean into Hughie's cave and over a lot of the Old Sioux Tract. Turn it into a forty-mile lake."

"What would Hugh say to that?" exclaimed Miriam.

Pink laughed.

"He'd be as ugly as a wolverene and try to fight it. But what could he do? Progress can't stop because the trail happens to cross a burying-ground, can it?"

Miriam turned thoughtful eyes from Pink to the stove. Finally she said,

"Can you tell me the name of some accredited engineer who may have gone over this ground?"

"Sure!"—with eager astonishment. "Charles Grafton. He used to be in Cheyenne, but now he's got some kind of a big job in Chicago. He went over this ground years ago with a pipe-dream that didn't pan out."

"If I should attempt to swing such a deal, have I your word that you will not mention it to a living soul?"

"Absolutely!" roared Pink. "Do you actually mean that you're going to consider it?"

"I might, if it is really feasible."

"And where do I come in?"—with sudden suspicion.

"I'd see that you were taken care of, of course."

"Hah!"—explosively. "Looks like I'd have a chance to show the missis I'm a man after all. Here comes Hughie to supper. Poor old bone-digger! I sure believe he'd go up and knife the Public Utilities Commission if he thought they'd give that charter."

"If a big concern got back of the construction of that dam, I imagine Hugh would have to get into real politics before he could block it," said Miriam carelessly.

"The only way he could stop it would be to make himself governor of the state," chuckled Pink. "Hello, Hughie! Sold any books since I left?"

"No; but I've loaned the dictionary," returned Hugh, with a laughing glance at Miriam as he followed her into the dining-room.

MIRIAM rode old Lemon Peel back to the ranch the next morning, and a day later Jessie appeared in The Lariat. Hugh was alone. She strode to the rear window and stood strongly silhouetted against the light.

"Hughie," she said abruptly, "what's going on between you and Miriam Page?"

"Have you asked Miriam?" Hugh thrust his cigarette away and leaned against the counter.

"Yes; and she sent me to you."

"There is this between Miriam Page and me," said Hugh slowly: "A very great love. I want you to give me my freedom, Jessie."

"I'll not give it to you, Hugh. Never!"

"Then I shall take it."

"How can you? Don't be silly! She's not big enough for you, Hughie. She's clever, but not big."

"She's much too big for me."

Jessie gave a sardonic laugh; then she said, with a sudden tragic conviction in her deep voice:

"Nobody is big enough for you but me, and I've wasted my chance. But Miriam Page shall not have you while I live."

"How are you going to prevent it?"

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"I don't know."

Hugh, startled by the depth of pain in Jessie's voice, looked at her with unusual attention. There was a new expression in her lips. They were no longer indifferent.

"Jessie," he said suddenly, "you know you haven't cared about me for years. Be fair about this—and be kind."

Jessie stared at him with wide eyes, and repeated wonderingly:

"Be fair! Be kind! God in heaven!" And she swung out of The Lariat and mounted Magpie without stopping to see her mother.

Hugh, much perturbed, paced the floor. He had a sudden sense of sadness for Jessie. But, after all, he felt that cold justice was on his side. Jessie had never been a wife to him in any full sense of the word. It was not fair of her now to be resentful and vindictive. He was glad that afternoon to take a long ride with Miriam and recover his sense of sureness. Miriam was more fascinating at this period than poor Jessie ever had dreamed of being. She was in love for the only time in her life, in love with all the ardor of a highly trained, primitively passionate mind. Small wonder that the hours passed with her drugged Hugh with happiness!

The days of Miriam's vacation passed all too quickly. She was obliged to return to Boston early in June. Her actual leaving was prosaic enough, as most leavings are. She spent the night before her departure at the Indian Massacre. Hugh met her at the rickety porch and carried her suitcase over to the station, and looked up into her face for a long, hungry moment as she stood on the observation platform of the train. Then he replaced his hat and turned away, for he could bear no more.

He needed now, as never before, to turn to his work. The Lariat was haunted by memories of Miriam, and the hours, which now bore no hope of seeing her, hung doubly heavy on his hands. As if to add to his discomfort, Fred, as the summer dragged on, reported findings on the Old Sioux Tract that confirmed Hugh's conviction that here was one of the greatest fossil-fields ever discovered. He chafed and fumed and wrote long letters to Miriam, and the days passed, as such days will. In midsummer a group of young Cheyenne cub engineers did some survey-work up the river, the perennial search for a dam-site that always so hugely amused the citizens of Fort Sioux. It was the tenth survey, Billy Chamberlain said, that had been made in six years.

In the early fall the convention of women's clubs was held in Fort Sioux, and Mrs. Morgan was elected president of the State Federation, to the immense amusement and pride of the town. Mrs. Morgan always had been looked upon with antagonism and determined contempt by the men of Fort Sioux. But now, after all, she was the acknowledged leader of the women of the state, each of these women the possessor of a perfectly good vote. There might be more to Mrs. Morgan than the men had been realizing, and the ban of contempt might well be lifted as adroitly as possible. At least, this was the idea expressed by Principal Jones one evening in The Lariat. He and Hugh were smoking while Chamberlain, Fred Allward and Pink Morgan chewed.

"Come across now, Pink!" said the barber. "Ain't you proud of the missis? She sure has done more for Fort Sioux than you'll ever do."

Pink jerked shoulders.

"Ain't it queer," he grunted, "that nobody can't pay my wife a compliment without twisting it round so as to insult me? But you folks wait! Something is going to break in this neighborhood before long that'll make all you folks begin to say, 'I knew him when—' about me."

"What's the general nature of the event, Pink?" asked Hugh. "How'll we recognize it?"

"I guess you'll recognize it when you see me starting the finest horse-ranch in the West with the profits. And do you know what I'm going to do with that all-hecked Indian Massacre? I'm going to pour a barrel of oil on it and burn it up. And never try to collect the insurance, either."

"You'll give the missis notice, so she can get out, I hope, Pink," suggested Fred Allward.

"Well—I never burned a woman up—yet," snorted Pink. "Keep on sniggering, folks! You'll talk different to me before long."

IT WAS on a glorious day in early September that Charles C. Grafton registered at the Indian Massacre. He was a man of late middle age, small as to build, with a

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good-looking, smooth-shaven round face from which peered out a pair of remarkably keen gray eyes. He arrived at noon, met Hugh at dinner, and followed him back to The Lariat. They smoked together for some time, with a mutual sense of liking, Grafton asking casual questions about the town and its environs. They were interrupted by Fred Allward, who slumped into a chair and said:

"Dog-gone it, Hughie, that Creetashus, as you call it, up there on the Old Sioux Tract is simply lousy with bones! Can't you salve your conscience enough just to ride up there once and let me show you something?"

"What have you turned up now, Fred?" asked Hugh eagerly.

"Oh, the damnedest-looking bird you ever heard of or seen. Must be twenty-five feet long. Got a bill like a duck, I swear he has. No sight for a drinking man, Hughie!"

"What kind of prospecting is this?" exclaimed Grafton, with a laugh.

Fred favored the newcomer with a cool glance.

"Well, stranger," he replied, "I'll swap you sight unseen. You tell me what your kind of prospecting is and I'll explain mine to you."

"Right you are, old chap!" agreed Grafton. "I'm out here to make plans for the building of a dam at Thumb Butte. I'm a sort of cross between an engineer and a real-estate man."

"The hell you are!" said Fred slowly.

Hugh, who had been leaning against the counter, straightened his long legs suddenly.

"You say to make plans? Just how much does that mean, if you please, Mr. Grafton?"

"Well," replied Grafton slowly, "it means that the Eastern Electric Corporation, of Chicago, will begin work next spring on a three-million-dollar water-power project at Fort Sioux. We have control of all the land necessary except such portions of the Old Sioux Tract as will be flooded. That's what I wanted to see you about."

"Has your company a charter for building the dam?" asked Hugh stiffly.

"That's pending in Cheyenne now. There's no doubt but what we'll get it—a mere matter of form. Great thing for Fort Sioux, isn't it?"

Neither Hugh nor Fred spoke for a moment; then Hugh asked another question:

"What is this Eastern Electric Corporation?"

"A Chicago concern organized to swing big deals like this. Backed by plenty of money."

Silence again, with only the rush of the river beneath the window. Then Fred asked a question:

"How'd you get control of the land you wanted?"

"Your fellow townsman, Mr. Morgan, got the options on that this summer. What's the trouble? I supposed you'd be wild with delight out here."

"The thing can't go on," said Hugh tersely.

Grafton's face showed surprise.

"And why not?"

"Because I won't allow it. I'll block it by refusing to part with any of the Old Sioux Tract."

"Of course it could be condemned," suggested Grafton, "but we mustn't let it come to that. Look here, Mr. Stewart; I liked you on sight. Suppose you tell me why you're receiving the news this way."

Hugh walked to the rear window, twisted his long, sinewy hands together, returned to his position against the counter and lit a cigarette.

"There's nothing personal in my attitude, Mr. Grafton. I can put it to you in a few words. I'm a paleontologist. The Old Sioux Tract is one of the greatest fossil-fields of history. It cannot be flooded."

"Ah! I understand. But only about half of the tract would be covered by the water, Mr. Stewart"

"But, unfortunately, that half is the invaluable portion. I cannot let the plans go on, Mr. Grafton."

FRED chewed rapidly and swallowed convulsively. Grafton studied Hugh's face with concentrated interest. Hugh's long jaw, now white beneath the ears, did not escape his observation.

"But, my dear chap, you can't believe that we could consider seriously giving up such a project as this for the sake of museum specimens, however rare they might be."

"I don't think you'd consider it voluntarily—no! I'm merely warning you that I shall force you to do so," replied Hugh.

"But how? Have you private means, Mr. Stewart?"

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"I don't know how I shall fight it," said Hugh miserably, but none the less sternly. "I shall use whatever property I have, if that becomes necessary."

"I'll put my little old Arizona turquoise prospect in," said Fred suddenly. "And I'll volunteer to shoot the first surveyor that puts foot on the Old Sioux Tract."

Grafton laughed.

"Good Lord, friends, this isn't frontier days!"

"You'll think it's a Sioux outbreak before me and Hughie gets through fighting." Fred was grinning, but there was no humor in his eyes.

"Well! Well!" exclaimed Grafton. "I had no idea I'd run up against a snag like this. I wonder who else in the town is going to receive me at the point of a gun."

"No one." Hugh's low voice was bitter. "Fred and I will fight alone. The rest of Fort Sioux will receive you with a kiss."

"Good! Now, listen, old man; remember we've agreed there is to be nothing personal in this."

"If I agreed to that, I was a fool," said Hugh. "You are planning to blot out an invaluable record of time—unearthing and preserving such records is my life-work. It's going to be a very personal fight with me."

"Oh, in that way, yes. I understand," said Grafton. "But"—here he rose and shook hands with Hugh—"I like you just the same."

"I'm afraid you may not feel the same way when I'm through," returned Hugh.

"Yes, I shall." Grafton's voice was sincere and a little amused. He lit a fresh cigarette, nodded at Fred and left the book shop.

Hugh and Fred stared at each other. Fred cleared his throat.

"He ain't a false alarm. It's a real fire this time, Hughie."

"What the devil can I do, Fred? I bluffed as hard as I could, but I honestly don't know which way to turn."

"If Bookie was here now," groaned Fred, "he'd know exactly who to see and what wires to pull."

Hugh bit his lip thoughtfully. He himself knew not a moneyed man or a politician of weight in the state.

"How could I possibly have foreseen," he exclaimed irritably, "that I'd ever have to fight this kind of a thing?"

"How about these geology friends of yours back East and everywhere?" asked Fred.

"Oh, I'll write them at once. But they're all poor, of course."

"Well, there's your Miss Page. She's in a bank. Make her get you some money. By the jumping heck! A woman ought to do a man a little real good once in a while."

"If you think I'd get money from a woman, Fred, you don't know me—that's all. But I will write her for advice."

"Advice—hell! What you want is enough money to go up to Cheyenne and buy the Public Utilities Commission with. Come down to earth, Hughie!"

"You talk like a crook, Fred. If I didn't know you were so blamed honest you bend backward, I'd throw you out the rear window." Hugh was smiling, but his voice was deeply troubled.

"I never had no good reason for not being honest till now!" ejaculated Fred. "Well, I'll go over and see what Billy Chamberlain has to say about this. You don't want I should keep my mouth shut, do you?"

Hugh shook his head, and Fred departed, almost at a run, for the barber shop.

WITHIN two hours the entire town was buzzing with excitement. The Lariat sold more books, most of them second-hand, to be sure, than on any previous day in its history—the necessity for making the purchase was deeply deplored by those who had actually decided to take the drastic step, but, as a matter of fact, while Fort Sioux maintained the same amused and contemptuous attitude toward Hugh's work that it did toward Mrs. Morgan's, there was not half a dozen persons in the town who possessed the courage to walk into The Lariat apropos of nothing and inquire into Hugh's personal affairs. So even those who already owned several books cast discretion to the winds and paid actual money into the cash-register that never in all Bookie's lonely days had rung so frequently and so gaily.

Hugh was outwardly quite serene, and not a single purchaser of a book felt repaid for his or her extravagance.

"Yes; I think I'll have to refuse to sell the Old Sioux Tract," was his invariable formula. "Yes; I'll fight them the best I know how. No; I wouldn't want to ask

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Miss Page for money." This, always accompanied by his twisted and appealing smile, took the sting out of the purchaser's disappointment, but left him or her none the less empty of gossip.

Hugh, in fact, as the afternoon wore on, was torn more and more between anger and despair. It was very evident that Fort Sioux considered him a fool and, like Grafton, had not the slightest intention of taking his declaration of war seriously. This latter attitude had the wholesome effect, finally, of submerging his despair in a sense of bitter protest against Fort Sioux's stupidity and lack of loyalty, and when he went to supper he was in a fighting mood.

PINK, Grafton and Mrs. Morgan were at the table when Hugh sat down. He evidently had been under discussion, and a silence fell while he served himself from the general platter. It was Mrs. Morgan, who had not volunteered a remark to Hugh for many months, who spoke first.

"Well, Hughie, how are you going to meet this trouble?"

"I guess I can meet it standing."

"Why in thunder should you fight it?" demanded Pink. "My God! Here's the whole of Wyoming waiting for power, and you think you can throw a few rotten stone birds in the wheels and stop it. I always liked you, Hughie, and I've stood with you against the women, but here's where we part company if you're going to make this kind of a fool of yourself."

"Just how do you come in on this, Pink?" asked Hugh, his low voice quickened with anger.

"That's all right. You nor nobody else'll ever know how I horned in. But I'm in, hoof to horns. I've been 'Mrs. Morgan's husband' in this man's town as long as I'll ever be. You've been howling for ten years about your work and how nobody dassent stop it. Well, this is my work, and they ain't anybody in Wyoming big enough to stop that dam being put up."

Hugh shrugged his shoulders. Grafton's keen gaze did not leave Hugh's face for some moments. He had listened all the afternoon to humorous comments from the town on the subject of Hugh's idiocy in regard to stone birds, but Grafton knew faces. And he knew that, while Hugh's broad forehead and eyes, set deeply and far apart, were the eyes of a dreamer, his jaw was the jaw of a man who, once roused, would never stop. It was evident to Grafton that the Eastern Electric Corporation had put a harsh hand on Hugh's one sensitive side, on the one thing in life that could give his long jaw just the set it wore now. And while he was not at all uneasy, Grafton thought it quite necessary that Hugh be pacified. In order to do this, he purposed understanding more clearly Hugh's angle on paleontology.

"You took your training in geology at the state university?" he asked genially.

"Yes," replied Hugh, taking a second cup of coffee from his mother-in-law, whose eyes never had been more observing.

"Mighty interesting work! My experience as an engineer makes me appreciate it. I'm a University of Chicago man myself. I remember that when I was a cub we ran on some interesting fossil remains in the Wind River country. But folks didn't know as much about dinosaurs in those days as they do now. It's got to be quite an art to unbed the specimens, hasn't it?"

"Yes," replied Hugh.

"How do you go about it?" asked Grafton.

"There's some information about that in a pamphlet I can loan you," said Hugh, "if you care to study the matter."

"Thanks. Who wrote it?"

"I did," answered Hugh.

"I didn't know you ever had anything published, Hughie!" exclaimed Mrs. Morgan.

"You didn't want to know, if it concerned fossils, did you?" asked Hugh.

"Dog-gone it, Stewart!" cried Grafton suddenly. "I don't want to be classed with the rest of these boneheads out here that can't appreciate your work. But what can I do? You know well enough that your position is foolish. Wyoming, Colorado, Utah are full of fossils."

"The Sioux Tract," said Hugh, "will, in my judgment, open up a hitherto unknown era to us. I can't afford to gamble on what other fields may produce."

"Well, dog-gone it, get the fossils out of there before we begin, then!" cried Grafton.

"Give me fifty to a hundred years and unlimited money, and I'll do what I can," agreed Hugh.

Grafton groaned comically and subsided. Mrs. Morgan darted in quickly.

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"I, for one, don't like to be classed as a bonehead, Mr. Grafton."

"Sorry, madam; but I'm going to say flatly that this whole town is bone-headed about your son-in-law. Dog-gone it; he's the only thing that gives this section of Wyoming any claim to be on the map.

"I've never belittled Hughie," asserted Mrs. Morgan. "On the contrary, the reason he doesn't like me is because I've always said he had the makings of a big man in him and was throwing himself away on fossils."

"You evidently don't understand what he's been doing, Mrs. Morgan," said Grafton.

HUGH crushed his paper napkin, excused himself and returned to The Lariat. He locked the door and, sitting down at Bookie's battered old oak desk, wrote the day's story to Miriam. He was sealing the envelope when some one knocked vigorously. He dropped the letter and opened the door. It was Mrs. Morgan.

"I'd like to come in and talk to you, Hughie," she said, with an unwonted tentative note in her voice.

Hugh did not move aside for her to enter.

"Not about Jessie." His voice held a warning.

"Not about Jessie," she agreed. "About an idea I have concerning the tract."

Hugh slowly swung the door wide and, after locking it again, seated himself opposite his mother-in-law. She did not look her years in the lamplight. She wore a neat dark-linen suit, and her slender figure was as alert in the chair as a child's. Her dark eyes were brilliant. Hugh, wrapped in his anxiety and his usual antagonism to her, did not notice that her throat was quivering as if the moment held great potentialities for her of hope or fear or both.

"When I say that I'm not going to talk to you about Jessie, Hughie, I mean it," she said. "But that does not mean that I'm not half heart-broken over the mess you and she are making of things. But you'll have to work it out, both of you, your own way. Now—don't jerk away. It's bad manners, if it's nothing else. Hugh, what do you know about state politics."

"Nothing," answered Hugh. "And, frankly, I'm realizing for the first time that Uncle Bookie had a better way of using The Lariat than I realized."

Mrs. Morgan nodded.

"I hoped you'd come to it. This state, Hughie, is in a queer condition. Theoretically, of course, there isn't such a thing as the woman's vote out here. As a matter of fact, the men are doing their unconscious best to form one by their attitude toward the Children's Code Bill the federation was lobbying for all last winter. When the legislature killed that bill, they gave birth to a woman's party. It won't be good politics to try to bring Children's Code up for another year or two. And the person that jumps in now, with something for the women to focus their bitterness on and fight for, will have a force behind them that the men will find hard to beat. Hugh, I want you to let the women of Wyoming help you to fight for the Old Sioux Tract."

Hugh looked at his mother-in-law suspiciously.

"What's back of it, Mrs. Morgan? You know as well as I do that the women aren't going to substitute my 'damned stone birds' for children."

"If you'll agree," said Mrs. Morgan carefully, "to get out and tell the women's clubs and church organizations what the Old Sioux Tract means to you and the world, if you'll do it under my guidance and as intensively as I direct, the Public Service Commission won't grant that charter."

"And you will have launched me in state politics!" exclaimed Hugh. "Mrs. Morgan, you are a clever woman."

"Not clever enough to have shown my daughter how to save her marriage," returned Mrs. Morgan quickly, a sudden moisture in the brightness of her eyes. "Well, what is your answer, Hughie?"

"How can there be but one answer?" asked Hugh bitterly. "But when I enter the fight, Mrs. Morgan, I warn you that I shall show no quarter to family or to any other human being whom I discover is trying to block or manipulate me."

"I hope you'll live up to that warning, Hughie," said his mother-in-law enigmatically. "The first thing we are going to do, Hugh, is to take on that air-plane the government is giving up."

What's the enigmatical Mrs. Morgan's big idea? Hugh begins the fight to save the tract. See the next instalment in April EVERYBODY'S—out March 15th.

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The Phantom *in the* Cab

Men Sometimes Appear to Be Monstrous Beings, and Pay the Penalty in Court, Too, When the Real Culprit Is That Blind, Blundering Thing Called "Human Society"

By Burton Kline

Illustration by Joseph A. Maturo

THOSE lawyer friends of mine have always been fond of "kidding" me, but never more so than since the Wall Street explosion happened almost under their very windows.

They may know more than we about the quieter side of the deals in the Street. Yet, without such knowledge, we newspaper workers, paid to pry into things, do happen to possess information of a sort that most of us prefer to forget.

I have seen marriageable daughters advertised with a subtlety and skill, with publicity campaigns of an elaborateness that would have struck with envy the prince of showmen. I have sat by while justices passed sentence on men or rendered judgment on issues and fortunes on evidence that never would square with facts in the possession of ironic reporters. There are men in high station, and apparently secure there, who might be sent to the pillory of public opinion if reporters I know were ungenerous enough to speak out.

When some notable man of finance breaks the iron ring about him and, summoning us to an interview, gives us his thoughts on some pressing public question, or invites us to his house to see at last his little-suspected collection of Napoleona or Chinese glazes—the finest in the world—we know what's in the wind. He wishes to divert public attention from some little deal that he has in mind.

Often I think what a Dostoyevsky, what a Hugo or Balzac we shall have when, if ever, Genius tips with her magic wing some metropolitan reporter. To me, lacking that touch, the business seems a colossal comedy.

Only the newspaper man knows how little of the news gets into the papers. The press is constantly accused of "suppressing the facts." That is true. And the public may thank itself that is so. High-minded newspaper men are eager enough to forget. The libel law takes care of those who are not.

Sometimes, however, it is next to impossible not to speak out and blow away the mere appearances that prolong some comedy of public injustice. That affair, the wreck of the Night-Hawk Limited, for instance, has always grimly amused me.

It still is vividly enough remembered. The frightful catastrophe horrified the country—one hundred and nineteen people killed on a night calm and clear, in a day when every known safety-appliance was thought to have put such disasters far and forever into the past. It happened, nevertheless. The signals were set. I saw them myself, blazing the red proof of their stern attention to duty. Every safeguard that experience and mechanical skill could fashion surrounded the scene with apparent

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As I looked down at him, what a strange and awful gulf appeared between us!

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protection. But the wreck occurred. The engineer at fault had stood at the head of the honor list of a road proud of its clean accident-record. He had never been known to touch liquor, and was more than usually intelligent. Still, the disaster happened under his hand, and he admitted the blame.

Yet it was not his fault. True, his hand was on the throttle; but so, also, was a phantom hand. He was packed off to the penitentiary for the deed; but I have always laughed at the severe punishment inflicted upon him by an outraged society. And to this day I suppose only one other knows the true, the odd, fantastic and yet perfectly logical cause of that wreck.

It was two— But no matter how long ago. I remember the night. A government potentate was keeping me idly waiting in the office for a long-distance pronouncement on some big matter that concerned us very much. It was after eleven, and still he had not called me. The call that came at last was from some one else. It waked me—decidedly.

Farley, a friend of mine in the —— Railroad offices, was on the line. The railways handle these matters differently now, and Farley's quivering voice gasped out the news. Thirty miles out of town, the Night-Hawk had been ditched, in collision with a local. Many of the latter's passengers were killed—no one yet knew how many, or how many were injured.

It was distinctly my job. I picked my own helper. The night city editor handed me a wad. And we flew to corral a taxi. At that hour the side-avenues are fairly clear, and we made amazing time to the station. But along the way I looked up at the starry sky.

"I can't believe it," I said to the cub who had come along. "Wrecks come off in a fog—or on sleety nights. It's as clear as a bell. The Night-Hawk ditched, on a night like this! People killed! And on the —— road!"

At the station we were the last to catch the waiting special. It was actually moving as we hopped aboard the single car crowded with surgeons and nurses, and reporters vainly questioning a glum and heart-broken superintendent. Farley also was there.

"Don't ask me!" he anticipated. "See what you see—that's all." He was as crushed as his superior.

People envious of a reporter's privileges may thank their stars they have never seen a wreck or heard one. Everybody, perhaps, has observed the making-up of a freight train in a yard, and remembers the bump as two sections are brought together to be coupled up, and how the bump travels along from car to car to both ends of the train. Magnify that to many thousand times the shock that steel or wood can bear. Add to that the hysterical shrieks of whistles gasping out a realization of being too late. Add the squeal of futile brakes, a terrific bell-like clang of steel, an instant's grinding of metal. Then a longer instant of complete and utter silence, with no bumping of cars after it, but a roar of steam, as you listen, as if a hundred locomotives were blowing off in unison. Through the roar, if you happen to be near enough and have self-control to listen, you will catch shouts, screams perhaps. The point of their origin will be unmistakable. Nearly always the drizzle or the fog is lit up with a red glare. One thing alone can have happened—a wreck.

IT WAS fast going, with the single car of that special. More than once I thought we were due for the ditch ourselves. Yet already when we got there a divisional wrecking train was on the scene, and we had passed two others making their best time. In the glare of a search-light, a lone derrick, manned by a frantic crew, was nosing helplessly at the tangle of steel car-bodies, heaped about like jackstraws, their very windows, open or glassless, gaping as if in silent horror at what had befallen them. But the search-light was more or less superfluous. A young mountain of splintered and burning wood spread light enough—and something besides.

With ample justification railway men are always on guard for the worst possible happening at the worst possible place and the worst possible time. It was too soon then to look into causes. The chorus of cries from that sinister pile commanded to other and immediate work. Yet a glance was enough to flash some comprehension of what had occurred. An already loaded local had drawn up at one of the typical wayside wooden stations. That night there had been some sort of jollification in the little valley town. Two hundred more,

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men, women and children, weary merry-makers, bound for towns and homes farther along the line, had tried to crowd into the train, stubbornly insistent. To load them aboard had taken minutes of time—minutes intended for making the siding a mile ahead. The local crew knew that, knew also that the Night-Hawk was due, always on the dot, and pleaded furiously with the crowd to hurry or, better yet, to wait. As it was, a flagman had run back as he should. And there was the block system for further protection.

But the crowd had been unmanageable, in its own way deadlocked. Then above its laughter and chatter the roar of the limited reached them. A few saw its dancing, careering headlight in time to flee. The rest——

When it hit, the wooden station, pierced by the scattered cars, toppled over on them, instantly a crackling pyre.

We began carrying them away such as we could reach. I lost all count, even of those I helped to snatch from the welter. One by one they were laid on the grassy bank beside the right of way—those who raved and complained, and those who were very still—and covered them with blankets from the Pullmans of the limited. The surgeons took care of them then. But one I remember, and always shall—a light-haired, curly-pated boy, tossed to one side and still clutching a wooden horse.

Except for the locomotive, the two mail-cars and the baggage-car, the limited had got off with nothing but broken windows. A bad shake-up for its passengers, and bruises, and cuts from flying glass were the worst they knew until the shock that awaited them as they hurried from the train to see what had happened. It sent the women into hysterics and made fools of the men. They probably had a wild time of it till Farley and the superintendent arrived and got the situation in hand. It was wonderful to watch that pair.

A few of the men—cool-headed business men, a sprinkling of students, and the members of one of the Big League ball-teams—were permitted to stay as helpers—sorely enough needed. For the rest, the limited was hastily drawn back to another station, out of the way. Then we set to work. There was enough to do, and little time.

Like a huge-caliber shell, the boiler of that flying engine had encased itself in the rear car of the local, squeezing its human victims out of the windows. That car was silent enough, except for the hum of steam within it. The mischief lay under the burning slabs of siding from that station. Humanity, as splintered as the wood, was under them. Never shall I forget the language of its extremity. Steel cars may prevent many a thing like that, but when they occur, such cars are worse than wood. They can't be chopped or sawed—or we might have got to more of the helpless beings. The rest, it was impossible to reach in time. We could hear them—that was all—praying to die. One man refuses to fade from memory, with a steel sill across his leg, too heavy for human hands and beyond the reach of a derrick, and the fire creeping up. So did his little boy creep up beside him. He said to that boy— But no; it would be sacrilege to repeat what he said.

With reason enough, one asked: "What did all that? Through what narrow crack of failure or oversight could such a thing dart into being?" I ran back myself to the end of the block, to the nearest semaphore, not a quarter of a mile away. There were the two arms, home and distance, stiffly extended in the gesture of warning, unquestionable, implacable. Their two red eyes glared defiance to any charge of dereliction. Afterward, the brakes on the limited were found to have been in perfect order. Vision must have been perfect on an autumn night of crystal clearness. Where was the engineer?

IT WAS I who first found him and talked to him. In the work of lining up the victims, as I rushed down the bank to help extricate a fresh one, I stumbled over the figure of a man writhing up the grassy slope. He seemed to be in agony, helpless in the legs, and pulled himself up like a swimmer.

"Give me your hand!" I called. "Are you badly hurt? There's a doctor there by the fence."

He sat up as suddenly as if he had received, not words, but an electric current. For my part, I received one look from his rolling eyes. Then he flung himself over and grasped at the damp grass and buried his face in it. He seemed to be mad with pain. I swung him over as he limply yielded and

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felt of his bones. One leg was broken, and his face was scored and blistered and gashed. I gave it one look, and then something happened. That man seized my hand in both of his and clung on. He almost broke my bones. We recognized each other.

Andrew McVane—"Andy," as I knew him, for we called each other by our first names. A dozen times I had interviewed him, at the roundhouse, in his own home. Well up in the brotherhood, one of the best engineers on the road, he had a real head on his shoulders, and many a good "story" had he given me. It seemed but yesterday since I had talked to him last. Now, as I looked down at him, what a strange and awful gulf appeared between us!

He was saying something. I bent down to hear.

"Have you counted them?" he mumbled. Then he laughed. "As if it mattered! One's enough." At the moment I couldn't answer him. He didn't wait for an answer. "And here am I!" he said in his thick, hollow voice.

"Never mind, Andy," I made talk of some sort. "It's bad; but you couldn't help it."

That is what I said. But as I looked down on him, a surge of frightful loathing came over me. I was expecting the impossible of him—to be aware of the enormity of what he had done and be adequately remorseful. He wasn't aware. He couldn't be. He squatted there, his broken leg dangling before him—not aware even of that. His elbows were on his knees, and his two hands drooped limply between them. I heard him gibbering something, something incoherent and unintelligible. Suddenly he screamed and made straight for the fire. With that, pity came to me—his cry was so heartrending. I knew then what it was to be responsible for something so awful.

I knew that fearful vision would never pass from before my own eyes. I knew it would never pass from his. Neither would the mountainous burden of responsibility ever pass. It was fettered to him forever.

From then on until the finish, this human wreck seemed the one needing any poor attention I might have to give.

OFTEN since then I have pondered what it must be to be the engineer who survives a wreck like that. Usually he is the first to die. And I know now what a mercy it is. I laugh, looking back over the wreck-stories we newspaper scribblers have turned out. The cheap sarcasm of them! "As a matter of course," we say, "the engineer himself was killed"—connoting a wish that he had lived just to see and be responsible for what he had done. And draw his full meed of punishment. And stand as an example. I never wish that now.

I have seen what it is to be the occasional engineer who lives on. Never to get out of his mind that vision of wreckage, not the smallest fraction of it—the men who were burned, the crushed little boy, all of it. Never to close his eyes at night without the certainty of seeing that vision, and hearing it, the crash and the crackling. Sterner punishment, such torture is, than anything the law ever invented. Prison-terms may end, but never that.

I heard it all from the lips of Andy McVane that night, when the words came to him at last. A thousand maniac impulses rushed him this way and that. It took all my strength to keep him out of the fire; it took all my persuasion to hold him back from bolting. He wanted to run, to leave that thing behind. As if it were possible! That night I knew where Andy McVane would land.

Yet, even at a time like that, the inherent manhood in Andy got the upper hand. Always he had been a force for good—in his union, in his community, everywhere he moved. In fact, he asked me to bring the superintendent to him. Once he had calmed down, he couldn't give himself up too quickly.

"It will all come right." I tried to soothe him. "Something went wrong. You've forgotten what it is. But it will come back to you. Think it out, man!"

It must be that, I decided. Something had failed—something he couldn't prevent. Anything else in such a man was unthinkable. And that happened to be the fact. Something at the critical moment had gone radically wrong with Andy McVane. What it was is so odd, so extraordinary in the fact of its utterly common and ordinary nature.

They haled Andy behind the bars and put him through the wheels of justice. Lord, what a howl of indignation went up in

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all the papers when Andy confessed to all the blame at the outset at the coroner's inquest! The disaster had startled the entire country. It was one of those moments when the eyes of a whole people are focused on one man. Andy admitted that the signals had been set against him that night. He had seen them. He owned as much. Yet somehow, in a manner which he himself was unable to account for, he had run by them. "Wool-gathering" was the best he could say of it.

As a matter of fact, the wonder is that it happens so seldom—that spell of blankness induced by the very vigilance, the strain of everlasting attention demanded of an engineer's mind. Beyond that, Andy McVane found it impossible to explain.

It wasn't enough to suit the country. People wrote in to the papers and rode him unmercifully.

Later, McVane might have supplied a better explanation. But then he refused. He had had time to think it out. I am the only being that heard that explanation from his lips. Only one other knows, who never needed an explanation. Yet to me it has always been not only a valid explanation but something that absolutely absolves McVane and places the blame where the blame belongs.

They had the man in jail, then, indicted for manslaughter and waiting his trial. How that man clung to me through it all! More, much more than to his little wife. He seemed to need a man. And I had seen what he had seen. I was one who understood, who knew what he was enduring.

Not that his wife was not all devotion. As often as she was permitted, she came to the bars to see him. But I saw at once that, though she couldn't help it, he was to her a man set apart. She seemed to see him from a distance. Soon I understood the reason.

Pretty little dark-haired woman she was, coming close on forty, I should say. There was fine intelligence in her dark eyes. Trim, the picture of neatness, she was a beauty in her way. They said little when she came, and chiefly looked into each other's eyes through the bars. Once or twice I was there when she arrived, and she plainly resented the place I had taken in Andy's esteem.

The fact is, the last time she came I caught something—a snap of her eye, a quirk of her head—that told me things, made things clear long before Andy himself broke down one day and told it all.

We've all seen it happen between man and wife when one or the other gets a little free with the tongue. Too easily it becomes a habit. For the best of reasons, wives are apt to acquire it first. At first it's an expression of love itself. A man's affection can be tested sometimes with a little cruelty. A young wife discovers the dangerous pleasure of teasing. It gives her a thrill to learn how strong her husband's love is—how much it will stand. She measures his love by the degree of his tolerance.

But, as the strain of life begins to make itself felt, the teasing habit too easily becomes that of nagging. Sometimes it becomes the sole language of the wife. She reaches the point where she is not even aware of this. "Nagging," indeed, may be a harsh word for the teasing that has become, rather, a ceaseless string of little edged taunts. When Andy McVane sometimes forgot his personal appearance, any other wife would have said to him, "Andy dear, don't spend all your money on me and neglect yourself; buy a new suit."

Andy's little wife would be apt to put it this way: "Andy McVane, I'm surprised that a man of your intelligence will go round looking like a tramp."

Both women would have meant the same thing. The difference is only one of the manner of speaking. But it's a difference that makes itself felt in time.

That was the note I caught in Mrs. Andy the first time I saw her and noticed the marked constraint between them. Perhaps that is why Andy, needing sympathy and support as a man rarely needs it, broke down one day and told me the whole pitiful story.

IN THE beginning they had loved each other madly—married early, were never apart when Andy was home. And when they lost their only child they clung to each other with a devotion warmer than ever. He was as proud of his bright and clever wife as she was proud of his steady promotions on the road and his rise in the councils of the brotherhood. It was something of a day in her life when she read in the morning papers the first interview that Andy had given to the reporters.

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But that seemed to change things. The little prominence that began coming to Andy put notions into Mrs. Andy's head. She acquired a new air. She was the wife of a rising man, a man deserving—deserving, among other things, vastly greater promotions, promotions more rapid, in keeping with his superior intelligence. In secret there was no end to Molly's ambitions for her handsome husband.

It was natural enough. Her very love of him prompted it. But there were other things, also, to prompt it. She mixed with other women, neighbors and friends, the wives of men in finance or commerce. To Molly, of course, these men were "not half so brainy as Andrew McVane." Yet the salaries they drew seemed breath-taking; or they made glittering profits in trade and pretentiously lavished them on their wives. Their comforts multiplied; their houses grew in size and improved in character as the family fortunes increased. Soon the papers hastened to chronicle their every visit to the theatre, their every entertainment at home, the cut and quality of their dress at every public appearance.

At first, these advances, unjust as they seemed to Molly, bothered her but little. Her faith in her husband's ultimate rise was strong, and she could afford to wait. But as time went on and the expected prominence did not come, her patience dwindled. The realization grew that Fortune was altogether too blindly dealing her favors. Life was passing her by.

This, Molly not only saw for herself but she had it plentifully brought home to her injured feelings. She got it from her more fortunate women friends. They galled her more the more kindly they treated her. The more persistently they kept her within their circle the more she felt left out of their larger lives. Conscious of mental gifts above their own and yet possessed of "next to nothing," Molly could only listen helplessly to their chatter of new diamonds, new cars and longer and longer summer and winter travels. It is beyond human nature for women not to gloat over the wonderful things their husbands do for them, forgetful of what may be lacking to those who listen. Men laugh at such matters. But it is beyond human nature for women, especially in this heyday of their sex, to sit by unmoved at these torturing contrasts.

In the end it wore Molly down. Andy's prominence was so long in coming. While every one within their ken sailed rapidly on, Andy remained a railway engineer. And so it was that Molly found her tongue. The habit of teasing and taunting set in, at first good-naturedly, then with a sharper edge. She began to notice the flaws in Andy's manners, in his dress, in his speech, in his views. In the end there was hardly anything about Andy except the fancied flaws.

PATIENTLY, with the gentlest disposition in the world, Andy took this kindly for a time. He understood. He sympathized with the little wife. He undertook to be as galled as she that he could not do more for her. Finally the teases and taunts began to sting. That drove him to return the taunts, to assert himself. This served only to bring down upon him fresh taunts, with a sharper sting. A contest sprang up between them, with each of them more and more eager to hand back as much as was given. So they heaped up between themselves an accumulation of barbed remarks, tart sayings that lingered where they were planted, and rankled and invited hotter rejoinders. Little else but such things came to be said. The bitter memory of them sundered Andy from his wife. It smothered their love.

Or, no; perhaps not that. The love remained. It was only hurt and afraid to speak. Man and wife were now forever alert, on the watch for some suspected sarcasm to resent, some jibe to match or return. Their most casual observations were found to have double meanings.

At last any trifle would start a tiff. And so it happened.

The final wrangle occurred one morning at the breakfast-table. Once more Molly let slip the favorite stab on the point of Andy's using his "boasted," his "supposed" brains in such degrading work as running a railway locomotive. And Andy had swung back as usual.

"Huh! That old gag again! That old singsong!" And he probably banged the table. "Well, let me tell you my work is decent and honest and honorable, and a damned sight more so than buying diamonds and furs out of real-estate swindles that I happen to know something about."

"Hm. I suppose you're referring to the

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successful men all round you. You're jealous!"

"Jealous? Hell!"

"Oh, well you may be! See what they do for their wives!" There came the usual long catalogue of the newest connubial gifts received by her friends. "See how their futures are provided for! While I—if you should die I'd have to take in boarders or"—a harsh laugh—"washing!"

"Oh, fiddlesticks! Wait till my invention catches on, woman! Then you'll have your sables and your limousine and servants and diamonds. And you'll have them honestly—with a reputation to boot that'll make you looked up to."

"Yes—yes! That precious signal system you've been years in inventing—what has it come to? What has it brought you? From the day we were married I've heard of nothing but that hideous contraption. A lot that'll do for us—after we're dead!"

It was on again. For an hour they kept it up, until it was past the time for Andy to rush off to his preparations for work on the morning of the day when the Night-Hawk Limited caused that terrible wreck.

ANDREW McVANE left his house a broken man that morning. Other men had happy homes—why had his to be as it was? Other men had children—where were his? Other men had loving wives—his own had sent him away not so much angered as heart-broken altogether. What a burden for a striving man to carry! It was hampering him in his work, keeping him down, converting him into a grouch, insidiously operating against his rise in the world. In such a mood McVane set off to his duties, moody, morose, secretly that worker more dreaded than the drinker himself by every railway superintendent—the man with domestic ills rankling within him.

Throughout the day McVane's mind dwelt on the heated session with his wife. It was the hottest tilt they had ever had. Things had never come to such a pass. Outrageous it was—the senseless things his wife could find it in her to say! All day long Andy went over it. Too late there came to him the telling shots that he might have handed back. As they flocked into his mind, he deliberately stored them in his memory, sharpened them, polished them to a more stinging point, so that, when he got back from his run, they should express what he meant beyond mistake. He intended them to settle matters, to put Molly in her place, to bring her to her senses. Hardly could he wait for the opportunity. Something was altogether wrong with life when an honest man could be so crippled and despised at his work.

There you have the explanation of the disaster. That night Andy's monstrous engine was running perfectly, but he was not conscious of this, never noticed the signals. His mind, too, was running—running like a dream—on other subjects than signals. A phantom was with him in the cab. Its hand was on the throttle, and the halted accommodation train at Brinsley station that night was struck by something much more ponderous than the Night-Hawk Limited.

At home, on that same night, Mrs. Andy perhaps went through the identical moods of her husband. She, too, probably, had been ineffably hurt, and tossed on her bed to the recollection of bitter things heard and said until sleep overcame her. But when she came down in the morning and picked the paper from her door-step, and saw the headlines streaking across the page—I often wonder what she thought and what she did.

"One hundred and nineteen people killed. McVane, most trusted engineer on the road, ran past the signals. Unable to explain how it happened." Thus it ran. Yet Molly knew better. The two of them, Andy and she, held the simple clue to a mystery that gripped the entire country.

In prison, Andy awaited his trial. He had refused all offers of bail, not out of bitterness but because he courted the punishment he knew was his due. He meant it to begin at once. Not that punishment but the other frightened him—the vision of the wreck, the man who was burned, the little boy crushed, and all of it. It seemed to him monstrous. For the deaths he had caused he was eager enough to pay. But that torture of the mind, laid upon him for no reason whatever! What fault, after all, had he committed to incur such sufferings? And Molly! It wrung the heart to see the look in their eyes when she came to visit him. Neither was bitter then. Neither blamed the other. They themselves only felt ground to pieces, together, under the wheels of circumstance.

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How the papers played up that trial! And yet it was brief enough. It was nothing at all to clear the railway company. Proof in plenty existed that all possible precautions had been taken. The signals, the road-bed, the rules, every factor in the situation, even to the eyesight, the health, the mentality of Andrew McVane, the engineer, were of clearly demonstrable efficiency. One thing had happened; one cause was to be ascribed to that wreck: The engineer had passed the signals. Why?

There was the question that had troubled Andrew McVane's dreams for months. Now it had come. Every eye in the court-room was upon him. Reporters waited with lifted pencils to dash down what he would say, what the country, for the moment, wanted to hear. Newspaper artists were sketching him as he sat there, his head drooping, his eyes staring blankly about, his hands dangling limply between his knees, and no sign of life about him but the gasping catch of his breath.

"Why did you pass those signals?"

Andy heard, and yet he did not hear. His eye shot one searching glance over the crowd and was turned quickly away. The district attorney repeated in sterner tones the stern question to recall the engineer's dazed faculties. Something, some hidden reason, some mystery lay behind it, the crowd all knew, and waited to hear what it was.

"Why did you pass those signals?"

And the answer came, in a voice barely audible:

"I—can't say."

The district attorney fairly leaped upon this.

"What! You pretend not to know? One hundred and nineteen people killed, a hundred injured at your hands, and you pretend not to know how it happened?" Andy's head only went lower. "A momentary lapse of your senses, do you think?"

"I—suppose—yes; it was that."

What more could he say?

It made an electric moment for his auditors. Even the judge shook his head. But it was nothing to the moment when the jury rendered its verdict and the judge ordered Andrew McVane to rise and receive sentence. It was indeed something of a moment, and a great thing happened. Yet to this day I doubt if more than a handful of those who saw it caught the full measure, the real truth, the whole poignancy of that one flash of drama there enacted. They all saw something, but only a few saw it all.

For when Andy McVane stood up, the figure of his wife shot up from close to the rail and stood with him—and with him, in a way, took sentence.

As long as I am to remember that wreck, so long am I to remember the look those two exchanged. The memory of those harsh words had vanished from both of them. With the old love in their eyes, but deepened with ineffable pity and understanding, they gazed at each other till the judge had finished what little he had to say. Then they smiled, and Andy was taken, to be gone for some years. But I think he was more at peace with himself then than he had been for long.

I think by then he had thought things through. I think he felt entitled to place the blame where I, for one, am sure it belonged.

AFTER the law had done with McVane, public opinion tried him again. What was civilization coming to? Yet I laugh when I think of the things that were printed of Andrew McVane, the ringing letters to the editors, the stinging editorials themselves. For the phantom in the cab with McVane, that laid its hand on the throttle and caused what itself condemned, was nothing less and nothing more than the blind and blundering thing we call "human society," doing in a little more spectacular way that night what we see it do every day and make no comment. We give the right of way to "success," to brag and gain, let the devil take whatever else may stand on the rails. Burn the red signals ever so brightly, the light they show us all is the green of envy.

Before the meeting of those two trains, the forces that drove them together had made McVane himself the wreck's first victim. At one fatally wrong moment a responsible mind was invaded by the spirit that less harmfully hustles us all. It hustled Molly and broke her. She dashed it on upon her husband. He stood it until—until, one night, the weight, the strain of it found a weakness, and crashed through a wide-open fissure in the wandering wits of an engineer.

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The Dumps Family

What Is the Dominant American Ideal of Love, of Art, of Success? Does Rossiter Really Represent Us, or Is He Just a Disease with Which We Are Afflicted

By Dana Burnet

WHEN I was writing special articles for the *Evening Herald*, Ed Rossiter was doing a comic strip called the "Dumps Family." It was not a famous strip; in fact, it was one of those features which are always on the point of being thrown out, but which manage to hang on, no one knows quite how.

A certain psychologist once said that the comic strip acted as a form of relief—I believe the technical word is "compensation"—for the mental repression inherent in our modern life. However that may be, it is an indispensable part of the American newspaper, and the rewards to the successful comic artist are large. Rossiter was only moderately successful; his stuff was well drawn and his jokes came from the same general fund of comic humor that supplied most of the other strips, but somehow his stuff didn't go big.

I think it hurt him. He pretended to despise the Dumps Family, but the truth is he had a secret affection for his absurd characters. They were his creations, and he loved them.

He was a mild, worried sort of man, tall and thin, with pale sandy hair and a freckled face whose expression was one of habitual solemnity. He wore a green eye-shade and green suspenders. He bought a new pair of suspenders once a year, usually in April, and they were always green. It never occurred to him to choose any other shade.

"Spring has come," we used to say in the office. "Ed's bought his suspenders."

Curious are the details that go to make up the general impression of a man. It may be that Rossiter's indifference to dress, his habit of wearing an eye-shade, his manner of standing with his thumbs hooked in the straps of his suspenders, his shoulders drooping and his chest a hollow, had served to mark him, in an organization that depended for its existence upon success, as one doomed to failure. If Ed had thrown out his chest and worn a smartly pressed suit of clothes with a belt, he might have been a great comic artist, with a crew of underlings to chronicle the doings of the Dumps Family. But, in that case, probably nothing unusual would have happened to him.

The thing that happened to him might have been incidental to a hardier soul. But Ed, under his comic, worried manner, was both sensitive and shy. At the age of thirty-two he fell in love, and it ate into him like acid. He corroded and went to pieces.

The object of his adoration was Miss Getty, the editor of the woman's page. She was an efficient little woman, plain-looking, crisp and clean, with a smooth pink complexion, cheerful, and in those days extremely proud of her job. She wore immaculate shirt-waists with starched white cuffs—it was a marvel how she managed to keep them unsoiled—and always had a few flowers distributed about her small office. She had not been long in the shop; journalism, as typified by the daily newspaper, was still new to her, and she had large ambitions concerning it. She felt that it needed the feminine influence. Her ideals were high and decidedly impersonal; they did not include the possibility of marriage.

Of all the men she knew, Ed Rossiter

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probably was the last who could have persuaded her to give up her job for the joys of a domestic career. At any rate, she turned him down with a crisp and business-like "No." She liked him, she said; he mustn't think that she was prejudiced against him because of the Dumps Family. She realized that there were sound psychological reasons for the existence of the comic strip. She was willing to grant him a certain importance in the scheme of things, but as for marrying him, "No."

He told me all this, standing before my desk with his thumbs hooked in the straps of his suspenders. He was suffering—I could see that. He was not a man accustomed to deep emotion, and he had no recourse against it.

"She let me down easy," he said; "but I know. She thinks I'm a boob. I don't interest her. I'm a failure."

"Oh, rot, Ed!" I was blustering in my attempt to comfort him. "You've got her wrong. How could she think that? You're not a failure."

"Yes, I am. Don't you suppose I know? Well then, let me tell you something: I'm going to quit and be a real failure. The Dumps Family! I'm sick of that junk. Sick as hell——"

His thumbs were pressing hard against the straps of his suspenders. He was pale, and actually trembling. I got up and put my hand on his arm.

"You're talking nonsense. Come home with me and I'll give you a drink."

"I don't want a drink. I want a lot of drinks, and I'm going where I can get 'em. I'm tired of this job, and I'm tired of this country. It's too damned full of ideals. I'm going to take all the money I've got in the world and go some place where I can get drunk, and stay drunk, and forget the—the Dumps Family."

I tried to argue with him, but he was stubborn, and he had been vitally hurt.

"I'm going to quit," he said; and he did.

The boss was kind to him.

"I'm sorry you're going, Ed. I think you're making a mistake, but that's your business. If I can ever do anything for you——"

"Thanks!" said Rossiter. "So long, boss!" And he walked out of the office, a self-confessed failure.

A week later, the Dumps Family disappeared from the sporting page of the *Evening Herald*. Its passing caused a slight ripple in the public mind. There were a few protests from persons who had found it compensatory; then another strip was substituted, and life in the *Herald* office went on—without Ed Rossiter.

I had one letter from him. It bore the postmark of a Mexican seaport town, and was disturbingly ribald in tone. Evidently the man had been drunk when he wrote it. It told me nothing except that he was "making a bum" of himself.

At the bottom of the page he had drawn a sketch in his most humorous vein. It was of the interior of a café, and represented his chief character, Mr. Dumps, sitting at a table with a bottle before him. A girl in costume was dancing in the center of the room, and there was the conventional dotted line drawn from Mr. Dumps' eyes to the eyes of the beautiful *señorita*. Below it he had printed in a shaky hand: "Mr. Dumps Sees Life."

Poor Ed! He was past the age when a man can be fooled by that sort of thing. The sketch, I realized, was a gesture of bravado, an outcropping of ego that might mean nothing or anything. I mourned over him and destroyed the letter. There was nothing to be done.

Several months later, our ship-news man, returning from a voyage to the tropics, brought back word that Rossiter had drifted to Havana. He had worked a while, it seemed, on a Cuban-American newspaper; then he had disappeared, and no one had seen or heard of him since.

We, in the shop, generally supposed him dead.

IN THE spring of 1919 I was sent by the *Evening Herald* to Havana to write a series of articles on the Cuban financial situation. I put up at the Inglaterra and for a month was busy interviewing bank presidents, financiers and other gentlemen of importance. At the end of that time I asked and received permission to take a two weeks' vacation. Havana had fascinated me, had given me a taste for the Cuban scene. I decided to see more of the country, and so planned several trips by motor-'bus to various points outside the capital.

One morning I started for Santiago de las Vegas, a small town lying about fifteen

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miles out of Havana. Some one had told me that there was a church there in which the bones of Columbus once had rested. (The bones of Columbus, I may state, have rested pretty generally throughout the West Indies.)

As a matter of fact, I went for the drive, which lay along a broad *calzada*, or high-road, white with dust, and arched over with a gray-green foliage through which fell dazzling patterns of sunlight. I remember a cluster of houses, pure white, piled up like dream-castles on the crest of a hill. I remember rolling through villages, shabby but colorful, past pale-blue shops and pink houses, past a lavender house, from the balcony of which a black woman in a rose-colored shawl stared down at us curiously.

One saw flowers, and banana trees making their graceful gesture, and over many of the houses the climbing bougainvillea, red and purple, with the purple predominating. The general effect was not theatric, for it contained life, and life has a way of showing crudely through its settings. But I was in an impressionable mood, and since one cannot very well dig deeply into a life seen from the seat of a motor-'bus, doubtless my observations were superficial, if not too warmly colored. I have set them down for what they are worth, because, in a sense, they belong to this story.

A stretch of open country, spreading away to break in low hills against the sky. The decorative palm trees, standing straight as savages with tufted head-dresses, the coconut palms, slender, leaning gracefully at an angle. Fields of tobacco and sugar-cane, the former surrounded by fence-posts that gave a pink blossom. I asked what sort of tree it was that bore such beauty in such commonplace service, and was told by the man who sat next to me—a Cuban who spoke English—that it was called simply "fence-post." It seemed that when the posts were cut and placed in the ground, they brought forth flowers. The thought delighted me; I inquired no further.

It was noon when I reached Santiago de las Vegas. I found it a sleepy little town, colorful enough, but with limited possibilities. I lunched at a *bodega*, in front of which drowsed the ponies of visiting countrymen—the countrymen themselves were playing checkers under the shadow of the bar—and then, at the hour when all good Cubans take their siestas, I went for a walk.

In the outskirts of the town I came on a road that looked inviting. I followed it, and arrived before long at a group of houses more pretentious than any I had seen in Santiago proper. Evidently I had wandered into the chief suburb, what we in the States would call "*the* residence section." The houses were large; their grilled balconies had a decorative flourish; they were set deep in green yards filled with flowers and well-kept trees, and, as a final mark of distinction, were shut off from the sidewalk by a rambling stucco wall set at intervals with wrought-iron gates.

A MAN was standing on the porch of one of these houses. It was a white house, almost covered by purple bougainvillea, and in the yard were poinsettia, croton and hybiscus bushes, dusty but beautiful. The man on the porch was the first person I had seen since I left the town, and I looked at him curiously. He was in his shirt-sleeves and, as I got closer, I saw, with a shock, that he was wearing an eye-shade.

It may be that unconsciously I had been thinking of Ed Rossiter ever since I landed in Havana; at any rate, I jumped to the conclusion that the man on the porch was Rossiter. I stopped before the gate of the house and stared at him. He was wearing also, besides the eye-shade, a pair of green suspenders.

"Ed!" I shouted.

He hadn't seen me till then. He gave a start—I could see the thin length of him straighten up—and turned toward me. For a moment he stood motionless; then he came slowly down the steps.

"Well, I'll be damned!"

"You'll be damned!" I said. "What about *me?*'

He stared at me. The eye-shade, pushed back from his forehead, gave him a ludicrously astonished, gaping air.

"Well, by the living—" His expression—it was still solemn, still mildly worried—changed to one of joy quite touching. He threw open the gate and grasped my hands. "For God's sake— I'm glad to see you, old man! Where'd you come from? How'd you find me?"

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"I didn't," I said. "It was pure luck." And I explained in a dozen words my presence before his gate.

"Well, I'll be good and damned! Come in—come into the house." He took my arm and fairly dragged me up the walk.

"Do you live here, Ed?"

"Live here? Sure! I've been living here three years now. I'm married."

"Married!"

"Yes. To a Cuban lady. You'll meet her later. She's lying down now. I never could get used to sleeping in the daytime, but she—she's not very strong," he added, with an intonation that puzzled me. It was as if he had touched on some secret cause of discomfort, some deep irritation that disclosed itself as solicitude.

"I'm sorry to hear that," I said.

"Yes; it— She's not very strong."

I felt suddenly a rank intruding stranger. I glanced about the flower-filled yard, looked up at the bougainvillea climbing the white wall and then at Rossiter.

"Sure I'm not—butting in, Ed?"

"What? Butting in? I guess not! If you knew what it meant to me to have some one to talk to—some one from home!"

The door of the house was open. He led me into the main living-room, which opened directly off the porch. I never can remember that room; I have only a sense of cool dimness contained within four white walls, of a tiled floor and an indefinite fresco, of an iron-barred window letting in a vague radiance which fell with dramatic selection upon the one thing that dominated the room—still dominates my impression of it.

That thing was a portrait standing on an easel—the portrait of a woman in a white mantilla, posed against a pale-blue wall, beside her a table holding a vase of flowers—a gorgeous and daring burst of color in relation to which her dark beauty was as dusk to sunset.

I KNOW something about paintings. I had painted once myself, and I knew intimately some of the best artists of the modern American school, had followed them and studied their work.

This portrait was one of the most extraordinary I had ever seen. It was bold in color, as daring as any of the latter-day primitives, and there was in it a sweep and freedom of design that struck me as fundamentally right and yet as challengingly original. Above all, it had that strange happening of beauty, that freshness which one sees only in the works of genius, and which means creation—life drawn out of life—wherever it appears. It sang and shouted its beauty through that half-veiled, half-lighted room.

It took my breath. I turned to Rossiter.

"Who— What—" I stammered.

"My wife," he said, and again I heard in his voice that note of irritation, of disguised impatience.

"Beautiful!" I murmured.

"Yes; she is. Come out on the balcony, old man, and we'll talk."

He led me to a screened balcony at the rear of the house, off the dining-room. This balcony looked on a small orange grove whose shining green foliage was sprinkled with dust-white bloosoms that gave off a heavy fragrance. He left me there and went back for whisky and soda.

"The servants are asleep," he said. "I'll have to get it myself."

"Servants!" I thought. "Good Lord! Old Ed has struck it rich."

Old Ed, in a setting of bougainvillea and orange blossoms—it was rather startling. Old Ed, married to a Cuban lady who, if she was half as beautiful as her portrait, must be very lovely indeed. I wondered about that portrait. Who had painted it? Did Ed appreciate it? I was still thinking of it when he came back with the drinks.

"By God, you don't know how glad I am to see you!" His voice was almost tremulous as he poured out the liquor. We touched glasses and drank. "Now," he said, "tell me about New York. How's the old shop?"

"The old shop's just the same as it was when you left it, and that's all I propose to tell you. It's up to you to do the talking, Ed. You poor fish!" I said indignantly. "We all thought you were dead."

He sighed, pushed back his eye-shade and settled deeper into his chair.

"I ought to be dead by rights, I suppose, but, somehow—" He paused, and then plunged abruptly into his story.

"I had about seven hundred dollars in my pocket when I left New York. Got rid of that in a hurry. Drank it up, threw it away, had a good time. Traveled in a cabin *de luxe* to Panama, drifted back to

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Jamaica, then to Tampico. Didn't I write you from there?"

"You did."

"Thought so. I got cleaned out in Tampico. Girl. Pinched my whole wad—what was left of it. After that I shipped as a mess-boy on an oil-tanker. Left her at Jacksonville and bummed my way down the coast to Key West. Worked my way to Havana on a rum-smuggler, went ashore and—stayed ashore."

I LOOKED at him, amazed at the epic quality in these adventures, still more amazed by their apparently ideal conclusion. Was this the same man who had drawn the Dumps Family for the *Evening Herald?* Was this the same Ed Rossiter who had got his heart broken by a plain-looking editorial woman in a white shirt-waist? He must have guessed my thought, for he said:

"Quite a change from life in the shop, eh? By the way, how is—" He hesitated, then added casually, "Miss Getty?"

I told him that she was as efficient, as immaculate as ever, but beginning to look a little shop-worn.

"I'm afraid the romance of journalism has faded for her, Ed."

He mused over that.

"It does," he said thoughtfully, and ran his fingers about the edge of his glass. Then he went on with his story.

"Well, I got a job on the Havana *American*, reporting and doing a little sketching. It paid me enough to keep me alive. I wasn't particularly interested in living, but I wasn't particularly interested in knocking off living. I wasn't particularly interested in anything. Not even booze. I got drunk now and then, just for form's sake, but I didn't enjoy it. To tell you the truth, I never did enjoy it. I wasn't cut out to be a successful bum, somehow."

"No. You seem to be cut out for—this," I said, with a gesture.

"You think so? Well, I'm pretty well settled here, anyway."

"Did you meet your wife in Havana?"

"I'm coming to that. Yes. It was quite a romance." He glanced at me cautiously to see how I reacted to this confession. I was careful not to smile.

"A romance?"

"Yes. I was riding one day in the Malecón—that's the sea-drive, you know. I—the fact is, I'd had a little to drink and was lording it about in a *coche*, an open Ford. There are some apartment-houses facing the Malecón, and on one of the balconies I saw her—my wife. She happened to be looking down as I looked up, and something—I don't know what—some things you can't explain exactly. Anyway, I spent the afternoon riding up and down in front of her balcony, and every time I went by she looked at me. The last time, she smiled. I wouldn't be telling this to any one but you, though, as far as that goes, there was nothing wrong about it."

I thought, "It's the same Rossiter, after all, the same solemn-faced comic man, the victim of public opinion, who must qualify his romance with 'there was nothing wrong about it.' "

"And you finally met her?" I asked.

"I had my nerve with me." He nodded. "I bribed the janitor of the apartment-house to tell me something about her. I found out that she was a widow, Señora Fernandez, and that she lived alone with a paid companion. I made up my mind to meet her.

"There was a chap on the *American*, a broken-down gentleman who did society stuff. I went to him. He didn't know Señora Fernandez, but he knew some one who did—a Spanish lady—I've forgotten her name. Well, the long and short of it is I managed to get an introduction to Señora Fernandez. She was beautiful and kind, and I—I lied about myself."

"How?"

"Told her I was an artist."

"Well, what was wrong about that?"

"It was a damned lie, for one thing. I told her—" He paused and gave an embarrassed chuckle. "I said: 'I'm an artist, and you're the most beautiful woman I've ever seen. I want to paint you. I want to paint your portrait.' "

"What!" I almost shouted. "Wait a minute! Do you mean to say— No; go on. What happened?"

"I had to make good—that's all. She promised to pose for me, and I had to go through with it." He shook his head as if depressed by the enormity of his deception. "I had to go out and buy paints and canvas, an easel—the whole works!"

"And you painted her?"

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"Sure! I went every day for a week. Serena—my wife—posed, and the paid companion sat in the room with us, fanning herself. It was all proper enough, and I painted away as if I'd been doing it all my life. Got away with it, too, as far as *she* was concerned. Anyway, I got a good likeness. I can draw, you know."

"Ed," I exclaimed, "do you mean to tell me you painted that portrait I saw when I came into the house?"

"Yes; that's the one," he said, and laughed sheepishly. "Looks pretty good, doesn't it?"

The astounding fact struck me that Rossiter hadn't the slightest idea how good, how very good, it was. I didn't try to tell him. I couldn't. I said:

"Yes; it's quite effective. Go on."

"She—she liked me, God knows why! And I—" A pause. "It was something new to me, having a woman care about me—a beautiful woman like that. So we—well, we were married. I knew that she had some property, but I give you my word I wasn't thinking about that."

I believed him. He was one of the few persons I had ever known who wouldn't think about that.

"Afterward, I found out that she was pretty nearly rich. This place we're in now was left to her by her father, and we moved out here—why, do you suppose?"

"I don't know."

"So that I could paint."

"Oh, you've gone on, then? You've done other things?"

"Other things! I guess I have! The house is full of them. They're stacked up in piles all over the place." He laughed, and then sighed. "My God, old man, it gets pretty monotnous at times. You see—" He lowered his voice and leaned toward me. "Serena thinks I'm the real thing. She thinks I'm a great artist, and that means I've got to go on painting these damned pictures to justify my existence. I've felt a hundred times like quitting and taking a job somewhere. I'm an American, and it goes against my grain to live on my wife's money. But I can't quit. She's wrapped up in her notion of me as an artist— She's a fine woman—much too good for a boob like me. I swear I feel like a thief sometimes. Not that I don't think the world of her and all that—but, you see, it isn't real." He took his head in his hands. "It's a kind of beautiful—nightmare."

"Haven't you ever shown your pictures to any one?"

"Shown them? I guess not! She wants me to. She keeps begging me to send them to New York, but I tell her I'm not looking for fame." He smiled miserably. "I throw a bluff, pretend I'm painting for my own satisfaction—all that sort of junk. The artist hiding from the world, you know. Temperament——"

"It's the most extraordinary thing—" I began, and stopped, aware of a presence in the entrance to the balcony. Rossiter's wife was coming toward us out of the shadows of the dining-room. She had on some sort of filmy gown, a thing as fine as gossamer, and walked so quietly that my first impression of her was one of startling unreality. She was like a spirit clothed in the filaments of a dream. It was not till she came into the light of the balcony that I saw what Rossiter must have seen the day he rode in the Malecón—her beauty—the dark and fragile beauty that he had caught in his portrait of her.

"I thought I heard you talking out here, Edward," she said in perfect English, but with an accent that softened and lent charm to her speech. Rossiter jumped up.

"Serena, this is Mr. B——, who used to work with me in New York—when I was on the paper, you know."

She smiled and gave me her hand. She was pale, and her olive-colored skin had a translucent quality. Her large, dark eyes lighted up her face, her whole self. I have never seen a soul shine so clearly in a human body as hers seemed to shine.

THEY both insisted that I stay to dinner, and afterward Rossiter persuaded me to give up my motor-'bus tours and spend the rest of my vacation with them. I was more than willing to do it. I wanted to look at Ed Rossiter's life, and particularly I wanted to look at his paintings. I had a feeling that I had stumbled on a miracle.

We dined that evening on the balcony at the rear of the house, which looked toward the west, and while we sat there the sky changed from light pink to pale emerald-green, then to violet, and at last to a

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velvet blackness into which sprang suddenly a pattern of brilliant stars. The table was lighted by candles, and beyond the screen the orange trees crept up with their glossy foliage, their spring perfume.

A Chinese servant, all in white, padded noiselessly about the table, serving us. Doña Serena sat at the head of the table. She had changed her gown, but it was still some vague stuff, some vague color—pale lavender, I think. Her throat and arms were bare. In the light of the candles she had the delicacy of rare glass—a delicacy almost tragic in its ethereal quality. Rossiter sat facing her. He had taken off his eyeshade and had put on a coat; but he was still incongruous. He did not fit into the picture, somehow.

Doña Serena talked to me all through dinner—about Rossiter. She told me what a great painter he was, and how some day the world would realize it. Rossiter squirmed in his chair and kept murmuring:

"Now, Serena! Now, Serena!"

"It's true," she said calmly, but with a glowing fervor. "To-morrow I will show you his work, and you may judge for yourself."

THE next morning, after breakfast, we assembled in the main living-room—the room of the tiled floor and the blurred fresco—and Doña Serena made Rossiter bring out his paintings. He grumbled a little as he did so, and affected an indifference that was partly genuine and partly temperamental pose. I understood that he was trying to live up to the ideal in his wife's mind—an ideal that he himself had helped to create. He was, for the time being, the intolerant master displaying with complete disinterestedness his genius to the world—the attitude of a Cézanne. It was really a brave stunt, and might have been pathetic but for the paintings themselves. As it was, his pretense was paradoxically ludicrous.

He brought them out one by one and set them up on an easel placed near the window. There must have been thirty or forty of them—landscapes, portraits (most of the latter were of Doña Serena)—and a few studies in black and white. Some of the paintings were shabbily done, the brushwork hasty and haphazard, the color put on in a kind of anger. I could imagine the man working away, furious, muttering to himself: "Damned nuisance, this artist-pose! Let's get done with it."

But they were all extraordinary. They had a go, a vigor, a spiritual clarity that was as surely inspired as anything that ever came out of the human unconscious. And some of them—indeed, I think, fully a third of them—reached the full perfection of their own thematic possibilities.

The subjects were entirely Cuban—a single palm tree, with a silver trunk, leaning against a turquoise sky; palms and mangoes; a study of a gnarled and grotesque ceiba tree at dusk—this last an extraordinary exposition of the bizarre and monstrous mood; a street-scene blocked into patterns of shade and sunlight, filled with the color of shops and the movement of people; a group of excited natives at a cock-fight; a line of sweating stevedores loading merchandise aboard a ship, with the vague shape of Morro glowering in the background; portraits of Doña Serena in a dozen poses; the figure of a heroic negress—probably the most powerful thing in the collection—standing nude against a red wall.

In treatment, the paintings were what contemporary critics would call "modern." I always smile when I hear that word, for one may find the same quality of modernity in the portraits of Franz Hals, of Rembrandt, of Velasquez, of Goya.

Some of these things I said to Doña Serena, at first rather cautiously, then, as the miracle mounted up, with an enthusiasm that brought a light to her eyes. I couldn't help it. I was deeply moved. I let myself go. I forgot to preface my opinions with warnings of my own fallibility as a critic, and delivered myself of praises which, however extravagant they may have been, were entirely sincere.

My performance amused Rossiter. He thought I was working to bolster up his own sham. His modest disclaimers would have been funny had they not been so utterly dense. He slyly encouraged me to go on, and once he even winked at me.

Afterward, as I was helping him to put away the canvases, he whispered to me:

"Great stuff, old man! It's made her happy, and God knows I owe her that."

His manner toward his wife was one of affectionate and tender humility. But he himself, I soon discovered, was fundamentally as unhappy as a man shut up in

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jail. Altogether, it was a most extraordinary state of affairs.

I stayed ten days in that house, and before I left I had solved, to my own satisfaction, at least, the mystery of Rossiter's unexpected genius. As I grew to know Doña Serena, I understood. It was she who had given him the soul from which he painted.

She was the most spiritual woman, the most spiritual creature that I had ever known. Physically, she was almost an invalid. Rossiter told me that she had lost a child during her first marriage, and from what he said I gathered that she had never been well since. She moved in that sensuous and vivid material world, among the colors, the perfumes, the brilliancies of Cuban life, like one moving in a world intangible and immaterial. Rossiter was the one reality in her existence, and to him she gave the very stuff of her soul.

He could draw, of course, and he must have had a gift for color. But the inspiration—I apologize for using so old-fashioned a word, but I know of none better—was hers. Through her eyes he looked at Cuba, at life, and through the sheer medium of her spirit he painted his amazing pictures. And he himself was wholly, completely unaware.

I did not attempt to alter or correct his own valuation of his work. Human states of mind are formed of strange and intricate combinations. It's a dangerous business to meddle with them.

But when Doña Serena asked me to take Rossiter's pictures back to New York and arrange for an exhibition, I consented. I couldn't refuse, and I wanted to do it, too. I felt sure that they'd be enthusiastically received, and I rather looked forward to breaking the news to Rossiter that he was a real artist. I had a sense of indignation for the stupidity of the man.

Rossiter protested, of course; but in this case Doña Serena was firm.

"It's time, Edward. The world must know. Great art belongs to the world. You must prepare to take your place among the painters of the age."

"All right, Serena, if it'll please you."

He said to me afterward, when we were alone on the balcony:

"I suppose you'll have to take 'em. Of course it's all bunk. No dealer would look at those chromos. Done by a comic artist! But when you write, remember to let me down easy. You might even lie a little, eh? It'd please her."

I assured him that I'd let him down as easily as possible.

The last night before I left, I walked in the orange grove with Doña Serena. We were alone—Rossiter was in the house, crating his despised paintings—and she said to me:

"I'm so sure of Edward's greatness. You feel it, too; so I can talk to you. It is strange, but I don't think he quite realizes it."

"No artist ever realizes his own capabilities," I answered.

"That is true, I suppose." She was silent a moment, then: "You are his friend. Will you not be my friend, too?"

"I will—I am," I stammered, rather confused by her low-voiced pleading.

"His work is my life. I have no children. It is my child. You understand? It is something I have helped to give to the world. From that first time, when he painted my portrait, till now, I have worked and labored. You are my friend. You will understand. It is he who has the genius, but it is I who gave it life. I am proud—I am happy to have done this. It is my life."

We walked on under the orange trees.

"I am tired, as a woman is tired after she has been through a birth. It may be that I shall not live to see the end of it. But I want some one to know. You understand?"

I stopped, took her hands and pressed them. I could think of nothing to say.

"Do what you can for him," she said. "And for me——"

Rossiter came out from the house, shuffling along blindly in the dark.

"I've got the stuff crated. Pounded my thumb and stuck a nail in my hand. Let's go back to the house and have a drink."

His banality infuriated me; but my resentment passed when I saw him take his wife's arm and heard him say gently,

"This night air's not good for you, Serena."

ROSSITER'S paintings created a sensation in New York, as I was sure they would. The first thing I did when I

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got back was to show them to an artist friend of mine, an older man of broad sympathies and high standing. He was immensely impressed, and insisted on telephoning at once to a Fifth Avenue dealer whom he knew. The dealer came down, looked at the paintings and selected twenty for exhibition. I offered to take charge of the publicity, and with the help of my artist friend, who edited the catalogues—Rossiter hadn't even bothered to name his pictures—we managed to stir up considerable interest in the exhibition.

The press reviews were even better than I had hoped for. It is anomalous to say that the critics agreed; critics never agree, any more than common mortals, and the fact that Rossiter was known as a comic artist perhaps served to bewilder them a little. On the whole, however, they recognized the unique value of his work and proclaimed it with enthusiasm.

THE effect in the *Evening Herald* office was amusing. Men who had known Ed Rossiter for years and who remembered him as a mildly successful cartoonist with a weakness for green suspenders now spoke of him as "old Ross." Old Ross, one heard, had always had it in him. Old Ross had known what he was doing; he'd waited his time, and when that time came, he'd put it over. He'd knocked 'em cold. He was an artist, old Ross was——

Miss Getty, along with the rest, had revised her opinion of the man. She came to my office door one day.

"I'm afraid we misjudged him," she said, standing with her hands folded neatly in front of her. She was the same Miss Getty—immaculate, pink-complexioned—but there was about her, in these latter days, an air of doubt, of insecurity. Many people who work in newspaper offices acquire that air. "I'm afraid we misjudged him," she repeated.

"Do you mean the man or the artist, Miss Getty?"

Her cheeks grew a trifle pinker.

"I mean the man. I always considered him an artist, even when he was doing the Dumps Family. The comic strip has a certain psychological value, you know—" And she vanished into the corridor.

I clipped all the newspaper notices and sent them to Rossiter without comment. A week passed—two weeks—a month. I heard nothing from him. In the mean time, the dealer had sold three of his pictures for a total of fifteen hundred dollars. I had the check in my desk. I was waiting to hear from him before I posted it.

Then one day, quite unexpectedly, he walked into my office, coat thrown open, thumbs hooked in the straps of his suspenders. He was more solemn than I had ever seen him before, and there was something unusual about his appearance.

"Ed!"

"Hello! I—I've come back," he said.

And then I realized what it was about him that had impressed me as being strange. He was wearing a black suit—and a pair of black suspenders! The comic-tragic note.

"What is it?" I asked. "What's happened?"

He bowed his head, not as a man stricken with grief but as one mourning from the depths of a profound humility. I knew at once that Doña Serena was dead.

"Yes," he said, in answer to my question. "She's gone."

He told me that she had been taken ill shortly after I left Cuba.

"She was brave, but it seemed as if she didn't want to live. One night she just slipped away. I couldn't stand it down there alone. So I came back." He rubbed his head with his hand and sighed heavily. "I hope I made her happy," he mumbled. "I tried to, but—I don't know."

"I'm sure you did," I said. "She told me, before I left, that she had been very happy with you."

"She said that?" It seemed to relieve and comfort him.

"She did. And she was sure of your success."

"My— Oh, you mean the pictures. What became of them, anyway?"

I stared at him.

"Didn't you get the clippings I sent you?"

"Yes; I believe so—yes; I remember. They came the day of the funeral. I remember putting them aside and thinking I'd read them later. They must have got lost when I was closing the house."

"Then you haven't read them?"

"No."

"Wait a minute," I said.

I went into the city room and took down

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the files of several different papers. These I carried back to my office, ran through them till I found the notices of his exhibition and then thrust them into his hands. I sat watching his face as he read.

It was a study. Repugnance, surprise, bewilderment—the critics were getting back at him there—and finally amazement were registered in succession on his freckled mask. He looked up at me with his mouth open.

"Great God of Hosts!" he blurted out. "They've gone and taken me seriously."

"You ass!" I said. It was what I had been wanting to say to him for a long time. Reaching into my desk drawer, I took out the art-dealer's check and gave it to him. Then I told him who and what he was.

He sat listening to me as a child listens to a fairy-tale, incredulous, fascinated, looking from me to the check in his hand and back again. When I had finished, he sat silent, staring at the floor; then he lifted his head and looked at me.

"Maybe you're right—maybe it's true. But it isn't me. The fellow who painted those pictures isn't me. He's dead."

And he got up and walked out of the office.

THE next day he came back. He was still wearing the black suit—it rather became his lugubrious person—but he had changed in some indefinable respect. He was more like the old Ed Rossiter.

"I've been to see that dealer," he said. "Made a dicker with him to take all those pictures off my hands. I'm through with them."

"Through with them?"

"Yes."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean what I say." He stood looking down at me, a kind of peace on his face. "I'm happy—for the first time in years. Maybe you'll think I'm a bum to say that, with Serena only just gone, but I was never happy down there. That's the plain fact—and you know it. As long as she lived I stuck to her. I tried to be what she thought I was—but now——"

"Don't tell me you're going back to the Dumps Family!" I cried.

"Why not? What's the matter with the Dumps Family?" He suddenly brought his hand down on my desk. "I'm a comic artist. That's me. That's my job, and I don't care what you or anybody else says. The art critics can go to hell. I'm going to see the boss and ask him to put the strip back into the paper—" He stopped and faced about. Some one was standing in the door of my office. It was Miss Getty.

I could see her white cuffs gleaming in the dingy corridor. She came forward.

"Why, Mr. Rossiter! How are you?"

"I—I'm all right, Miss Getty. How are you?"

I got up and sauntered out of the office, pulling the door to after me. It closed on them with a hollow bang.

SIX months later, Miss Getty married Ed Rossiter. They had bought a little place out in Jersey. As soon as they were properly settled, they asked me to dinner.

I went. It was an afternoon in May. I got off the train at one of those small suburban stations that so inevitably characterize the community to which they are the gate and the symbol. I had not been sure what train I would take, so Ed was not there to meet me.

I walked up the main street. On either side of it were small frame houses painted an economical chrome yellow. Every house had a bay window, a porch, a front yard and a lilac bush in the yard.

A low hedge ran parallel with the sidewalk, and beyond it lay the little square patches of grass, close-clipped and split evenly in the center by narrow cement walks. The sound of lawn-mowers was in the air, and a smell of evening cookery.

In one of these front yards, before a house with a porch and a bay window, I discovered Ed Rossiter. His coat was off and he was wearing a pair of brilliant new green suspenders. He, too, was pushing a lawn-mower.

When he saw me he abandoned it and rushed down the walk, beaming.

"Well, old man! You found the place all right. Come in! Come right in! We're expecting you. Supper's almost ready."

He took my arm and led me toward the house. I felt compelled to say something.

"Nice place you've got here, Ed."

"Sure is! Of course—nothing fancy about it, but it's a home. Now, you just wait here in the parlor till I call Jennie."

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I waited in the parlor. It was a small, curiously shaped room with a brown wall-paper. The furniture was new—and brown. Oak furniture, substantial, and precisely arranged.

There was a large framed photograph of Miss Getty in her wedding-gown on the center-table. On one wall hung a copy of a picture whose title sticks in my mind as "Fairy Visions." On the opposite wall was a steel engraving of Washington disposed with his family on the porch of Mount Vernon.

Mrs. Rossiter came in and greeted me cordially. She looked astonishingly young and pink and vigorous. She had lost her air of insecurity.

"We wanted you to come before, but we had such a time getting settled— Ed! You've left the lawn-mower out."

"That's right. I'll put it away." Ed went out and rescued the lawn-mower.

"He's such a child," murmured Mrs. Rossiter, watching him from the window, "I have to keep reminding him of things."

There was in her voice as she said this—a note of deep and ineffable contentment.

A colored girl, who somehow had a look of impermanence, appeared and beckoned mysteriously to Mrs. Rossiter.

"Excuse me," said the latter. "The roast——"

Ed returned to the parlor. I asked him how the Dumps Family was going.

"Great!" he said, "We're going to start syndicating it next month. I tell you, old man, those paintings of mine were a great ad for the Dumps Family."

WE HAD had dinner, logically enough, in the dining-room. It was even smaller than the parlor, but the furniture still was brown oak. Over the sideboard hung an appropriate still-life—the picture of a dead duck suspended above a large, remarkably rendered dead fish.

The dinner was served, more or less extemporaneously, by the colored girl, who seemed to be governed in her movements by the raising and lowering of Mrs. Rossiter's eyebrows. But it was a good dinner—roast beef, roast potatoes, lettuce-and-tomato salad, prune whip.

After dinner, Ed and I went outside to smoke. We sat on the porch steps in the closing twilight and puffed our cigars. He had taken off his coat again and sat with it over his knees. I could see his suspender-buckles gleaming. The chorus of lawn-mowers had begun again, and occasionally we heard the rumble of a passing train.

"The lilacs are blooming," said Ed Rossiter idly.

"You like it here, Ed?"

"Like it? Why, it—it's *home!*" He leaned toward me. "Tell you something, old man: Haven't told any one yet, and don't you let Jennie know I told you, but —we're expecting a baby in September."

"No! Good for you! I congratulate you, Ed."

He looked at me earnestly, solemnly.

"I'm almost scared, sometimes, to think how happy I am."

I couldn't resist asking him a question.

"Don't you ever regret giving up your painting? You had a career ahead of you."

He shook his head.

"No, I didn't. It's like I told you. I painted those pictures all right. But they weren't me. I could no more have gone on painting than I could have gone on being a bum. I'm just a common, garden sort of American, and the Dumps Family—they're American, too. It means a whole lot to me to be able to put my stuff over. I take pleasure in doing a good comic. The Dumps Family—that's me."

His wife came out with her knitting and sat in a rocker on the porch behind us. Ed looked around at her; she smiled, and he turned to me as if to invite me to witness the wonder of his world.

"I'm the happiest man on earth, B——," he said in a low, ecstatic voice. "There's no two ways about it—the very happiest!"

"What are you whispering about?" demanded his wife, rocking imperturbably above us; then: "Ed, you'd better put your coat on. It's getting cool."

Ed laughed and put on his coat. The twilight deepened; the windows of the houses along the street began to shine. From somewhere close at hand came the sound of a phonograph, playing a late—but not the latest—Winter Garden song-hit.

In imagination I could see that street stretching across the continent, built up with just such houses, peopled by just such people. Duplicates. Millions of them.

The Dumps Family.

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"I shall not die. I shall find my way back down to the valley and out of the mountains. Go!"
The squaw stood now proudly erect, burdened by her child.

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Transition

The People of a Region Where Modernity Makes Haste Slowly—the Loves, the Jealousies, the Turbulent Dramas in Which They Play Parts. A Novelette—

By Stanley Olmsted

Author of "Mountain Farmers," "Granny Hooper," etc.

Illustrations by H. C. Murphy

IN THE valley cove under Atoah Top, where Little White Wing Creek churns in a fish-hook curve, nearly doubling upon itself, there is a group of post-boxes. They stand in an even row, fastened, like pigeon-cotes, on rectangular posts sawed from slim joistings.

Upon these post-boxes a dozen trails converge. One road attains them as a goal and expires—the old wagon-way from Little White Wing Valley. Toward them it descend Sneed's Knob, hugging the steep sides, tunneling the majestical shades of giant hemlocks in a long diagonal. To reach them it makes a sudden, final drop to the ford and seems to gasp, spent in the roar and foam of the water.

Once this old road, built not long after the expulsion of the Cherokees, held its own, steeply up and steeply down, across corn field, wooded ridge and scrub thicket, on into Stoversville, eight miles away, approximately, as the crow would fly. Now the graded rural-delivery route decapitates it with a single stroke of complacent leisureliness. And Stoverville is six miles further off. It is modernity making haste slowly.

Viney Sneed descended in the hemlock dusk of the mountain named for her great-grandfather to meet the rural delivery.

She had helped her sister Georgia wash the dishes after the eight smaller Sneeds had finished their midday dinner—with the exception of the tiniest. He fed on lustily at his mother's breast while the oldest two girls straightened out the corn-pone and string-bean chaos. Viney had taken time to whiten her delicate but sunburned skin unnaturally from a box of talcum powder and to put on her wine-colored velvet coat before she started for the mail.

Occasional flat disks of sunlight on the old wagon-way made a time-dial in the otherwise unbroken twilight of the hemlocks and reassured her. She would be at the foot-log by the ford by a little after one. As the chances ran, she might have to wait for two hours. But Viney did not mind.

She was still deep-hidden in cathedral shades, a quarter of a mile above the ford, when a young man, sitting by the creek near the post-boxes, looked up and harkened. He was dark, smooth-haired, and slender in face and body. He wore leather leggings that had once been unusually fine, offsetting rude but nearly new shoes of the regulation army pattern.

He had been reading with back propped against the bole of a beech tree which slanted behind him, out over the creek at the angle of a tilted *chaise longue*.

He had heard the sound of mule-hoofs. As he sprang across a margin of tough cropped grass dividing the creek from the road, the book swung lightly in his hand, with his forefinger inserted as a mark. He planted himself in the middle of the road to wait Sam Smathers' mule, which now

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emerged at the sharp turn of the old Indian field a hundred yards away.

NOT until the mule came stolidly alongside was any word exchanged.

"Howdy?" said Sam, with neither cordiality nor animosity, and reached for the letters in one of his mail-sacks.

"Howdy yourself?" returned the young man with the book. "You've brought me a letter to-day. I can see it in your eye."

"Three of 'em," said Sam.

"Good boy!"

Sam delivered them as he located them, one at a time.

"I could migh'-nigh pick 'em out with my eyes shet," he ventured. "Them the gal sends you is always sweet-smellin'—like store soap."

The mule started onward. An afterthought came to Sam.

"Are ye a-goin' back to the camp by way of the Sneeds', Mr. Warren?" he asked, as his mount made another halt directly beside the row of boxes.

Warren looked up with one of his letters already opened.

"I didn't come down that way. I took the back trail over the gap. It's two miles shorter than the road, you know. But if you've some urgent message——"

"Oh, I reckon it'll be all right to leave it in the box. It's a parcel for that oldest Sneed gal. She's gen'lly on hand here when I tote in a parcel for her. Some of them Indians the government nusses and pays, for keepin' their no-'count selves alive in this here locality has been knowed to steal."

"I'll be delighted to give it to Miss Viney," said Warren. "I can return by way of the road just as easily. What's an extra couple of miles in this country?"

Sam handed him the package, together with four letters. Each of them bore Miss Viney Sneed's name, written with pencil in characters variously faltering or labored, and postmarked solely by the cross-mark of Sam's fountain pen.

The mail-carrier stared complacently at the open scented missive which Warren held awkwardly, beladen as he now was with his own letters, with Viney Sneed's letters, with a package and a book.

"Reckon the gals up your way must like ye as well as the boys down here likes Viney Sneed."

"I don't know." Warren shrugged "They've been making a pretty bad showing. Don't think for a moment that you bring me love-letters every day. A lot of them are bills."

The mule had started on the climb of Atoah.

As the carrier vanished in an oak thicket, Warren read again the sprawling flourishes on the four rose-hued pages. Whatever it might be, it was evidently not the type of billet-doux which had been the text of pleasantries with the carrier. He swore softly, tore the sheet and its envelope into bits, deposited them on a flat stone and ceremoniously burned them, applying the same match with which he rather nervously lighted a cigarette.

Already he had placed all the other letters, inclusive of those for Viney, in the pocket of his flannel shirt. His perusal of one of the three addressed to himself had subdued his eagerness regarding the other two.

The package which he had promised to deliver now lay provisionally on top of a post-box. Flinging himself face downward on the grass bordering the creek, he resumed the reading of his book.

A little to the northwest, on the yon side of the stream and fifteen hundred feet above him, Bald Stone jutted gauntly from the dense woods behind it, like a fist outthrust and uplifted, hewn in the block by some paleolithic sculptor.

There was a significance in Warren's pose as he lay flat on his stomach, hand propped on elbow, soothing his ruffled nerves with the music of a conjurer in prose rhythms. But it lay in a circumstance of which he was unconscious.

On the upslanting surface of Bald Stone, another young man, somewhat younger than himself, had paralleled his movements one by one. When Warren had stood hailing the mail-carrier, this young man also had stood, venturing for an instant to the very edge of the dizzy cliff, When Warren had talked with Sam Smathers, whose eyes would be trained to keener mountain sharpnesses, the other had dropped back out of sight with lightning stealthiness. When Warren had flung himself on the ground, the red-swarthy youth high above him had jerked his lithe form in its faded and stained and tattered denim up to the flat face of the rock. Now he lay, exactly as Warren lay,

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watching the man below with a patience that matched Warren's own absorption in the printed page. Both men were really only waiting; and that for which they waited was identical with both.

VINEY'S gait was slow. It was not in her temperament to hurry, and her natural disinclinations in this respect were assisted by the fact that it was midsummer and her velvet coat was hot. Yet how could she hope to look her best without wearing it? She was vaguely discontented with her appearance. "Fleshy" was the term used by lifelong admirers for the maturity into which recently she had bloomed with the pink opulence of a rose.

She had sent for the coat late in the winter, after selling a brindle heifer she had claimed as her own since the morning she had come upon it new-born and sickly and doctored it to healthfulness. The coat was number 10,772 in Hammer & Searer's collossal thousand-page mail-order catalogue. She had never owned anything half so fine. The coat covered everything save the shoes that had arrived with it, and were bursting on the sides, and stockings with a hole here and there.

She had ordered new and very high-heeled shoes of Hammer & Searer, at four dollars the pair, warranted three times that value, and real lisle stockings at seventy-five cents the pair. Sam Smathers would surely fetch them when he passed by the post-boxes to-day.

Her father, Jiles Sneed, whilom farmer and cattle-raiser between day's jobs as expert lumberman at the various logging works within a fifty-mile radius, had given her half the money from the sale of a hog she had fattened. "A gal with so many beaus needs lots er clothes," he had said to her, winking. His oldest daughter was an expense he could regard complacently, in the expectation of early disemburdenment.

With her milk-soft skin, her hair burned to streaked shades of pale tan by the sun, her wide blue eyes, Viney held her own as the beauty of all the mountain farms up and down Little and Big White Wing. If it came to choosing a husband, she could take her pick.

When she met the mail to-morrow, she would wear the new things that ought to arrive to-day. And she would let her sister Georgia wash the dishes, and take time to arrange her hair like the cuts in the catalogue, and put on her white dress under the wine-colored coat. Mr. Warren, who had seemed to admire her so unreservedly, even in the rusty cotton tatters in which he had first come upon her, should see how nice she could really look.

The afternoon sun trailed a yellow turgidness as its orbit touched the sky-line of the highest ridge to the west. With slow, magnificent gestures of immolation, it sank behind the towering woodland back of Bald Stone. A little while ere this happened, the air had grown yellowish. Then, and very gradually, the scooped U-shaped bowl of the Indian field along the county highway was bathed in lambent greenishness. The atmosphere assumed a liquid character like something overflowing from outside and pouring softly downward. Clean lines of shadow were wiped out as they lengthened, as a soft wet brush might wipe out the purples in a water-color. They became a uniformity of clear grays toned with saffron.

"Rain—to-morrow—maybe."

The swarth-supple youth, high on Bald Stone, adjusted the safety-cock of his rifle, relaxing all effort at concealment. The words, as he formed them, were in the tongue of the Cherokees. He had broken at last his fruitless vigil in which he had lain for hours, motionless as some faded blue lichen grappled to the rock. Far below him the bowl of hooked corn field, yellow highway and foaming creek was not utterly deserted.

"*Utalu'li—utalu'li,*" his mind repeated. "*Utalu'li*—it is not yet time."

He made the breakneck descent straight downward where the very trees took root at their peril. He glided, slipped and clung, scrambling down outcropping sheets of hard, naked shale as if the non-pliant brogans hampering his feet were equipped with living claws. Yet somewhere in his air-line homeward he must have wasted time.

Not until the darkness was thick as the fur on a beaver, with only the first glimmer of the oncoming moon, did he reach the door of the new house built by his father.

A young Indian woman sang to her baby, tilting her chair back and forth on the porch of the dwelling. It was a farmhouse pretentious enough to have been under no discredit even had it stood among the newer

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structures going up in Stoversville. From the standpoint of the Cherokees, with their farms outcropping amid the properties of the whites, it was a palace.

Ha-wiye'ehi—ha-wiye-hyuwe-hi-wi——

The young mother stopped her crooning, but not the nearly soundless tapping of her chair to and fro. The youth had appeared at her side without audible footfalls. But that was the way of the men, and the women, too, of her race.

"Eat," said her stepson. "*Tsiyi'giu.*"

The wife of the father made a gesture of her head toward the back of the house. Her eyes followed the silhouette of his form as it vanished within. In a little while, as if at some irresistible call within herself, she rose and followed as far as the room at the right of the hallway—the best room. She laid her two-year-old papoose, now sound asleep, across the foot of the crimson table-cloth which adorned the stickily varnished store bed of oak veneer bought by her aged husband for purely ornamental purposes. She could hear his raw breathing now from the room opposite. He always retired when the fowls flew to their perches.

With no more rustle than a shadow that passes, she crossed the back porch and stood behind her stepson's chair.

He had lighted the best-room lamp with the gaudy flowers painted on its bulging chimney, and was partaking of cold corn pone and stewed squirrel. Occasionally he shook a wilting hickory brush above the food to drive off the flies. Looking thus down upon his well-shaped head, with the baffling hint of a wave in its soft black hair, her eyes, shadowy as tarns, took on a peculiar luster. It might have been the light, tinted by the flowers on the lamp-chimney; but a red warmth seemed to burn within them.

"*Anina'hilidahi,*" grunted the youth. "Mind the flies."

She lifted the fading bough and began waving it. She was younger than he, and both of them could speak the English that is spoken by the whites along White Wing. Often they used it by preference, even among themselves.

But when emotion swayed them, they resorted always to the language of their forefathers, and then their speech became flawless as the source of human thought. For their language was fixed, built up of instinctive symbolizations.

"You stay away until the late moon is all but up," began the stepmother in a Cherokee monotone that clucked and chanted. "You lurk and lurk everywhere and nowhere, and bring back no deer meat—nor even a squirrel. You bring back no speckled trout that are easy for your father's gums without teeth."

His profile remained immobile. He broke a section of the corn pone and crumbled it slowly. She noted that he ate no more who had eaten but little. She thought: "The fat white squaw of the blossom-face once smiled upon him and he knows no rest. It is the taint of paleness in his blood." Aloud, she said:

"*Atsil'dihye'gi!* Will-o'-the-wisp trailer! You lurk empty-handed and watch her who greeted you when the shell-blossom was pink on the trails, and looked at you with eyes like a turtle-dove when the leaves were little. I know all things you do. You hide where she goes, as the hunter hides where wanders the doe."

It was squaw's chatter from the woman of his father. He made no reply. He rose, carrying away the lamp, and left her sitting in the darkness.

IN THE best room, where she had laid the papoose, was a parlor-organ with worn Brussels carpet on its pedals. It was open. The squaw stepmother enjoyed making sounds upon it in her long hours of loneliness. The youth paused and touched the keys. They made no answer. To get response from this thing, of which once he had been so proud, you must labor with your feet like an ox in a treadmill. Then it blew and wheezed like a fat white man climbing a trail.

Flush beside it was an ancient square piano, his latest acquisition. The keys jangled with a melancholy, mysterious and satisfying, as his fingers searched among them, combining them into chords that would have defied notation—weird blends of fractional tones from strings long out of tune.

"*Danda ganu.*" His lips moved soundlessly in unison. "Two looking at each other. *Dida'skasti'yi*—where they were afraid of each other."

His stepmother gazed upon him from the slowly whitening moon-dimness beyond the door.

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"It is the pale taint in his blood," she reasoned with herself, striving to stay the quickening of her breath. "All the tribe knows of his mother's faithlessness, though none has told him. The whites know him for one of their own. Their girls smile upon him when they come out to gather the shell-blossoms, and their faces are like corn dough in the spring."

Toward nine the moon swam out above the blunt spike of Atoah. Its pallor fell slant on the post-boxes and they became sentinel specters. Mists rose above the creek and floated above the old *detsanun'li*—the field of the green-corn dance. Ropy fogs descended from Bald Stone and from pitch-like gaps and gashes in the grayish blend of the mountain forests.

When the young squaw stepmother crossed the field, the pervasion of things unheard seemed to lie over the earth with dank furriness, like a blue mold. Still ringing in her ears, the echo of her stepson's music shuddered forth and again with retching soundlessness that might have been a sighing, deep-fetched from dust of the dead who made up the loam beneath her feet.

She glided over the rail fence enclosing the field toward the post-boxes. She bore in her hand a letter.

There beat against her ear-drums a muffled thudding. She shrank back, her heart contracting. Indians do not cry out—not even the women. She left the letter in its appointed box and darted more swiftly than a dragon-fly back across the road, secreting herself in the already man-high corn.

The white rider rode slowly through the mists on its white horse. It reached the post-boxes, paused, looked long and searchingly about as if to note exactly the location, as if to search out every landmark. Then, as slowly and deliberately, it turned on its tracks and retreated, growing dimmer and dimmer in the moon-milky fog. The muffled thudding fell, rose again, hastening its beat, and at last was silent.

"*Une'ga sa'gwalt*—the White Spoiler," she told herself. "*Age'hya ge'yagu'-ga*—the moon-woman. It is death for more than one!"

She crept back, somehow, to the sheltered dwelling in its scooped cove behind the hill. Scawl had ceased playing. He had gone to his room under the eaves. She could see the twinkling of his light and hear, listening closely, the rustling of the pages of his book as he turned them.

DUMBARTON WARREN, erstwhile lieutenant in the artillery branch of the Rainbow Division, also returned at nightfall to the spot from which he had set forth.

He was nearly at the end of a long, long holiday. Gassed somewhere in the Argonne, he had been billeted after the armistice to Hospital Number Sixty, at Oteen, North Carolina. His case was not serious. But a small spot in one lung had remained agreeably doubtful. So he had lingered there, the recipient of constant diverting "liberties" from complacent physicians in officers' uniforms, until lingering had become an absurdity. Dismissed finally and at last from Oteen, he was at present a guest of his friend Boleman Mayfield at the surveying-camp back of Sneed's Knob, in Little White Wing Valley.

Warren's host, too, had once attained his lieutenancy in the A. E. F. A born mountaineer, inbred with instincts that are of the rocks and soil, he had served his country during most of the fighting at light desk-work in the environs of Paris.

Thus the two young men complemented each other—the sybaritic New Yorker, who had tasted the savagery of dugouts, and the mountain farm-boy, who had acquired so dexterous a French that he had been deemed more useful as a translator of budgets than as a scout in No-man's Land with a hundred pioneer and Indian deftnesses up his sleeve.

For the work just now before him, no man could be better fitted than Mayfield. It was his business this summer to fix the boundaries of various tracts of government forest reservation in dispute both by white settlers and Cherokees. In early childhood he had trudged barefoot over the short-cut trail Warren had taken this afternoon to a to a log school that had stood where the post-boxes now stand in days before the opening of the new mail-route. He had worked his own way progressively to Stoverville's new school, to the new high school at Boulder City, fifty miles away, and on through the state university at Chapel Hill.

His father had been unable to read or write. He had died before Boleman was twelve, a pauper by reason of his

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unconquerable aversion to tending his meager corn fields.

There had been the usual twilight talk before Warren's return to Mayfield's camp that night. Mayfield was drawling between pulls of his pipe:

"No sir-ree! There's no such farm and timber property in all White Wing as old Scawl Tallotuskee's, even if it ain't so big. His full Christian name—if an onery Indian can be said to have such a thing—is Udsi'skala, and his boundary-lines are as sound as a brand-new cow-bell. He asked me to make sure about 'em because he wants to leave every inch of the land to his son—named after him."

Winks passed like signals of freemasonry among the grizzled-haired mountaineers, brawny farm-boys and mild-spoken lads from high school and university who made up the surveying crew.

"The son's eyes are as blue as mine," said an ukulele player.

"And I 'low," added a tobacco-chewer, with a parabolic expectoration, "that most of we-uns in this here party knows why his eyes is blue."

The youth with the ukulele wanted to hear more about it. He was camp cook, and got most of the gossip tardily.

"Just an old Indian romance, son," Mayfield told him paternally. "As the story goes round here, old Scawl got his property from his second wife. A little before her marriage there's supposed to have been some love-affair with a fascinatin' stranger. I reckon she took it seriously. Anyhow, she died when young Scawl was born, and old Scawl's as proud of him as if he were his own. As sure as I sit here he's never let the boy suspect he's a half-breed. But there's no kick comin' to the old scoundrel. He's now married, for the fourth time, to the prettiest squaw ever seen on White Wing since the boy's mother died. She brought him yet more timber-lands and she's borne him a girl papoose of his own—so he may omit to poison her. That's what riches can do, even for a toothless old Indian."

The tobacco-chewer widened his spitting-parabola.

"Riches—nothin'! If what they tell is so, the only riches that got him that last squaw was the riches of havin' a son that wasn't his'n."

Mayfield removed his pipe.

"That," he said, "is one of our white men's lying slanders that I'd just as soon not have repeated in my camp—and none of you boys can accuse me of bein' squeamish. I've no more respect for the Indians than the rest of us. They're mostly a lazy, dishonest lot. But I happen to know that lad very slightly—and I tell you fellows I'd known him better if I could—if he himself weren't too proud and sensitive to let me. I wish a lot of our own white boys were half as clean and studious and ambitious."

The men sat dumbly. They were bewildered at the feeling displayed by their camp boss over what they regarded as nothing.

LATER, Mayfield heard the men hailing his late-returning guest—recent inmate of a hospital. He stepped to the doorway.

"Thought of puttin' out a searchin' party for you, Barty," he drawled.

The men had been jibing Warren.

"Man, man!" they were exclaiming to one another. "Wasn't she a peach, boys?"

"Say *which* peach when it's Barty. There's peaches ripenin' round Sneed's Knob as well as fallin' along the railroad tracks—aye, Barty?"

"What's the big idea?" asked Barty.

"Better get it from the boss."

Warren concealed a touch of irritation. He was ravenously hungry, he admitted. He retreated with Mayfield to the long kitchen ell of the shack behind the workroom, which was also the sleeping-quarters.

When the two were alone, the guest did not immediately press the matter of his curiosity. Bole's usual jocularity seemed to have deserted him. They sat mostly silent while Warren devoured the cold rations. He felt something very like embarrassment in the presence of his host.

"I reckon it must 'a' been a pleasant afternoon?" Bole asked him, with the manner of a man making talk.

"Well, these mountain girls seem to have plenty of time," replied the guest. "I talked to Miss Viney and then read aloud to her and then talked to her some more, hour after hour. All the while I kept expecting she'd have to tear herself away any moment and get back to the family housework. But she seemed to like the book and not to mind me. I've a hunch she's been inoculated with

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this better-clothes-and-education bug that's spoiling so many of these charming young natives. Why can't the meddlers of progress leave this one heavenly, primitive spot alone?"

Boleman smiled.

"I 'low she finally did get home without too much concentrated uplift."

Warren had flushed ever so slightly.

"There was very little more in it than I've told you, Bole. At my own suggestion, we finally started up the old Sneed's Knob road and back to her home. There was one little kiss just before we came up out of the pines to her daddy's shanty by the roadside. You know me. But it didn't seem to mean anything to her. The old man wouldn't hear of my not staying to supper. I had to try to eat the Sneed family cooking. Ugh!"

"That," said Mayfield dryly, "is what I call downright devotion. It ought to get you at least partial absolution in heaven for puttin' over the kiss. As for old Jiles Sneed, he, of course, looks upon you as the finest prospect in husbands that's yet swung Viney's way, and he already sees Viney livin' in palaces of a mighty city as the wife of you and your millions. In old Jiles' estimation, the only thing that keeps Viney from catchin' a president of this U. S. himself is the fact that he ain't had a chance to see her, and happens rarely or never to be a widower."

"We strolled back down the road together after supper," Warren went on. "The family acted as if they expected it of us. And that reminds me, Bole, what a lonesome, uncanny place it is toward night under those big hemlocks. I had the strangest feeling of being followed—of being peered upon by unseen eyes. It gave me the creeps."

"It was supernatural territory you were traversin'," explained Mayfield. "Every inch of that old hemlock stand and the field below it, too, is haunted—accordin' to Cherokee tradition. When Scott's soldiers were pryin' out the Indians from every rock and laurel bush, and herdin' 'em in the stockade like cattle before drivin' 'em out to Indian Territory, there was a beautiful squaw, with blue eyes and a skin as fair, nearly, as any white woman's, and a burnish of bronze in her hair. And she fell in love with one of old Scott's young captains and became an informant and traitress to her race—" He paused. The memory of the tale as told to him in childhood by his father gave a rapt expression to his eyes.

"Do go on, Bole," said Warren. "When you narrate those yarns you got from your poor old dad, you're a man inspired. Your English becomes almost human."

"Thanks for kind encouragement," resumed Boleman. "The Cherokees named this probably half-breed woman 'Ays'sta,' which means 'The Spoiler.' As their legend has it, she rode about in the moonlight on a snow-white horse, clad like a princess in a bleached doeskin, immune to their arrows or firearms, strikin' terror to their hearts. When they saw her, they believed it meant that they must choose between voluntary surrender to the white soldiers or sudden and bloody death. The stockade commanded by her lover was located in the field of the green-corn dance right where Sam Smathers' rural delivery makes that sharp détour. A few hours after the white herders drove out their captives, she was found on the deserted premises with her throat cut—no doubt by her inconvenienced captain. The descendants of Cherokees who managed to elude Scott's men or to escape back to these mountains, call her the 'White Spoiler.' They believe she's always seen by victims in impendin' tragedy."

There fell between the two men a moment of silence.

"But," reminded Dumbarton, "I mean—this joke among your men that I'm not in on—this 'peach along the railroad track'—and all that stuff?"

Then Boleman had to tell him.

THAT rose-hued letter Warren had burned might have forewarned him, but it had not. It is not in human nature to look for an instantaneous climax to disaster.

"You're telling me the truth, Bole? You're not just helping out some of your bum jokers?"

"The God's truth as I sit here, Barty. The woman got off at Peak's End station, twenty miles to the northeast of here, and inquired of everybody for you. Me and three or four of the boys just happened to be there to meet the train and get that consignment of theodolites and measurin'-rods and things I'd sent over for repair to Asheville. Somebody referred her to us—and she came. There was no dodgin' her."

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Warren went red with ill-controlled anger.

"You might have steered her off. I suppose your conception of honor was too delicate."

Mayfield jiggled at his pipe-stem with a wire.

"The blame thing won't draw," he observed, as if altogether preoccupied with the problem of his smoke.

When all was satisfactory, he refilled the emptied bowl and applied a match.

"Did the best I could, Barty. There was no foolin' that peroxide beauty. She knows *me* by sight from Asheville—and she had the straight dope of your whereabouts in earlier letters from your cautious self. I lied all even you could expect. When at last I caught sight of her, she was beside the driver on the front seat of the mail-hack, headed for Stoversville metropolis."

"My God!" groaned Warren. "Sam Smathers will reassure her the post-boxes are my stamping-ground, and explain to her she need only follow her nose round the loop of the rural-delivery road. She'll hire a riding-horse to-morrow at sunup and make a bee-line."

Again Mayfield's pipe gave him trouble. He said to Warren, without looking up:

"It's all very well, Barty, to make love to a good-lookin' mountain gal like Viney Sneed. You haven't any idea of the self-preservative quality in the demoiselles around here who've growed up—*grown* up, excuse me—in the faith that there ain't a pound of free love from the Gulf o' Mexico to the Canada line that's worth an ounce of sound, cold-storage matrimony. I ain't a bit scared of your harmin' Viney or being damaged by her. But when you dandle along with a publicity beauty—a near star, camera-actress—that's a different matter. *They're* serious!"

Warren said nothing.

"I'm just a hill-bill, Barty. But I've been around some, and it does seem to me a man with your raisin' and experience might 'a' known. Sensation is the breath of life to a blond papier-mâché heroine like that—whether she comes from Paris or Hoboken. The whole inside of her head is lined with the film-thrillers she's acted in. You might 'a' known, Barty."

"I wish to God they'd never shot any of their scenes around Oteen Hospital!" exploded Warren, with tragic fervor. "What do you think, Bole? Only to-day I got a letter from her accusing me of losing her job for her. Says the director got jealous and fired her the day they finished. Sam Smathers' mail-pouch reeked of her patchouli. I burned the blasted musk-smelling thing—to get the odor off my fingers."

"Well," said Mayfield in the tone of one who drops a problem-defying solution, "here's hopin' you shake the vamp lady as easy as you did her musk! Let's go outside with the boys. They'll be thinkin' we're divin' between ourselves into that two gallon of moonshine we keep hid against snake-bites."

AS A matter of accuracy, no suspicions involving the camp jug of whisky had been in the mind of Mayfield's men. Yet both the camp boss and his guest had been under lively, low-toned discussion while they remained inside.

"They're nothin' alike when it comes to women," one had remarked. "It's strange, too, how straight Boleman keeps, when you consider his origins. His mother left his daddy when Bole was a baby, and never was knowed to ask after her child or show the least interest in it to the day she died. No flightier gal ever went out o' these mountains to wear fine clothes in Atlanty."

"Them old Warren grants on the charts," said another, with characteristic shifting of the topical center, "was all the property of this here feller's granddaddy—might'-nigh all of three counties. The old boy come down here in the 'Fifties and gobbled up enough of these mountains to make his descendants rich as Rockefeller—if only they'd held on. They'll be knowed as 'Warren Grants' on all our surveying'-maps till the trump of doom, I reckon. But this young feller's daddy must 'a' ben light-natured as son Barty, I reckon. He run through every penny of his money. Died poor while his only son was gettin' gassed over there."

"Son Barty's in another line of family trouble now."

One of the youngest of them laughed as he said it. He had happened to be with Mayfield when the blond actress had descended from the train.

The oldest of the troup, a lumberman, farmer and general jobber of approximately sixty-five, had silently chewed and spat

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until the fitting moment. He added his voice in a tone implying that nothing said until now was of the least consequence.

"This here Warren boy come by his nature honest. I knowed his daddy back in the 'Nineties better'n Bole Mayfield knows son Barty. Unless my calculatin's wrong, Barty's got a half-breed brother that'll balance some of the family losses when old Tallotuskee leaves him that 'ere timber-land."

That night, when the subdued bubble of the creek blended with the deep, virile breathing and gusty snores of the men, Warren lay wide awake.

There was but one course before him. He must conquer the languor and aversion to work that had settled upon him like a spell of a lotus-eater since that quickly passing dream of nightmarish horror three years before.

THE thunder-burst of 1914 had caught him idling at Monte Carlo. To-day he was a beggar. And beggar that he was, he must go back and begin again when all the land was in the grip of a depression resembling a silent panic. Or he must try to find something else he could do in a year historically Cain-branded with the unemployment of six million Americans.

He owed every shopkeeper, garage-owner and hotel man in Asheville. He might as well leave with the dawn, tramping over short-cut trails to the railroad.

Mayfield would be breaking camp in another fortnight. And Mayfield himself was by no means the least of his creditors. This very night his host had drawn him aside before retiring and pressed a hundred dollars upon him against the journey back to the city where he must try to find work.

It was like Bole. But surely it testified his final view of the only course open. How intolerable this sleeplessness! These waking nightmares—here in this isolation! They hung and stayed—like nettles. He seemed to feel his reason snapping.

In a sudden gleam, as on wings of inspiration, he remembered Bole's allusion to that which they kept against snake-bites. Warren knew where it was kept, under some rhododendron roots by the creek. He slipped into some of his clothes—his army trousers, his shoes without the leather leggings, his gauze undershirt. Every one of the other men, including Mayfield himself, slept the druglike sleep of healthful weariness.

He found the jug safe in the minature cave scooped from the loam of the creek by the push of rhododendron roots. He swallowed great gulps of the white-fire liquid. The sweet, hot, etheric nausea of its taste unnerved him for an instant. He gulped greedily again.

Mayfield had said it made devils of men. Well, he needed a strain of the devil in his blood. The years of mollycoddling at Oteen had made such a milksop of him that he couldn't kiss a pretty mountain girl without conscientious qualms, without a superstitious terror that he was watched, that she was guarded.

He felt the long-atrophied devil-strain mounting, exhilarating his soul, and his heart exulted.

More and deeper gulps. He had overstayed his welcome at the camp? Very probably. Why not leave now—this minute? The hundred dollars Mayfield had given him was safe in his hip-pocket in a folded wad of ten-dollar bils. Why not leave now?

But not too directly. Kill a little time first, scouting round the old trails under the moon until to-morrow. Walk out into the hemlock privacy with the beauty of White Wing once again. She was stodgy, cow-eyed and fat, but she'd wake up. In the caveman stuff of his farewell, she'd learn what kissing meant!

A little excitement might also be had, if desired, with that other blonde—who surely would be laying for him by to-morrow—down round the post-boxes. Everything goes—when a man's going.

But he had no gun. By all means he would need a gun. He didn't anticipate a single situation in which a gun might not be an acute necessity at any moment. The unseen eyes in the hemlocks, the peroxide beauty whose cerebrum was choked with film-thrillers, even, not impossibly, old Sneed himself. How could a man know?

He crept back to the shack. No Indian could have been more stealthy. A loaded revolver lay at hand on the table at the head of the first cot—a mere formality of camp-safety. He rammed it into his hip-pocket with the wad of bills—ten-dollar bills—given him outright by Mayfield.

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With long strides he set out down the road toward the fork of the first trail.

He balanced the jug on his shoulders with immense care, as though its contents were precious.

VINEY SNEED slept with her sister Georgia. The frame shack of the Sneeds was thinly partitioned. As the oldest of nine children, they were honored with a bed all to themselves. In the same subdivision of the shack, four of the smaller children occupied another bed, two at its head and two at its foot. Their breathing throughout the night was a soft-graded rhythm, to be disturbed neither by the snores of the father, which shook the partitions when he was at home, nor wails of the baby quickly hushed down by the mother.

Often Mrs. Sneed had to reprove Viney and Georgia for whispered conversations in the night. They had learned, therefore, to gage her slumber cautiously, by the manner in which her puffy breath commingled with the varieties of respiration everywhere about them.

After what seemed endless hours, the baby wailed with renewed vigor, and, finding his alarms futile, became quiet again. This was the most positive guarantee of safety. They might now whisper freely.

"What time you reckon it is, Viney?"

"Long after midnight, I reckon."

Georgia's next whisper was closer to her sister's ear.

"Are you a-goin' to have him, Viney?"

"I reckon maw and pappy'll jist about kill me if I don't—but he ain't asked me yet."

"Them four letters you got——"

Viney was impatient.

"Don't think I'm a-goin' to have any of the likes of *them!* Where's the sense in jist marryin' somebody round here and livin' on somewheres on White Wing Creek jist like we-uns lives at home."

"There's one thing you hain't never told me Viney—have you ever been in love?"

"Have you?"

"Oh, *me*—I ain't never had the chance—not with anybody that counts—like this fine Warren feller."

Viney's sybillant discontent was growing apace.

"One thing I can't see through," she whispered so loudly that Georgia had to "sh" her down. "Why do us white folks look down on anybody that's got a drop of Cherokee blood in their veins—whether they're rich or not. You'd might-nigh think they was niggers. Yet they ought to be looked up to like aristocrats. All these mountains is really theirn. Us white folks jist robbed 'em of it."

"Viney—there's somethin' you've been a-keepin' from me—but I guessed it long ago." Along Viney's close, warm body ran a trembling. "Long ago, Viney—that day when we rode to church double on pappy's horse and the horse got scared at the smell of a rattlesnake and started to bolt straight down Cowslide—and it a thousand feet above the creek and steep as a leanin' wall—I saw the way you looked at him when he kept us from gettin' our necks broke."

"He was there like somebody sent from heaven!" Viney was exulting in the memory. "We never knowed what direction he come from. He was jist there. He sprained his wrist savin' us. Remember how the horse flung him out over the edge of Cowslide and he hung on? It was his Cherokee blood that kept him from gettin' killed himself. They're like cats, them Cherokees. He turned away as if it wasn't nothin' when we thanked him."

"He's a mighty pretty feller—prettier, even, than Mr. Warren," admitted Georgia. "But oh, Viney, you mustn't be in love with him—*you mustn't!* Not even in your secret heart. He's worse'n jist a half-breed. He's-a——"

She had to stop. The term the mountaineers applied to one of his dishonored birth was something that could not be uttered even in whispers in her sister's ear.

"It's shameful to say that. How does anybody know what he is? It's all jist scandal-talk. And Georgie—he'd save me again—if any harm was to come nigh me. He was watchin' me and Mr. Warren all evenin' from Bald Stone. When we walked out toward dark, he was guardin' me all the time from behind the hemlock trees. I felt as safe as if I was at home. When Mr. Warren kissed me, I felt sort of scared—but it wasn't for myself—it was for Mr. Warren——"

"Hst!" broke in Georgia, signaling with a

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shuddery touch of the hand. "What's that? Listen!"

At first Viney heard only the far-away shriek of a screech-owl. A wind seemed to be rising. The quavery, womanish wail was wiped out in the soughing as it died away.

"Listen!"

More like an echo than a direct sound, faintly resounding as if beaten back from the hill in front of the house, came the sound of singing—ribald, incoherent.

It, too, faded away. The screech-owl's shrill tremolo, so like the mortal terror of a woman, intervened. A punctuation-mark in the night silences.

A hoot-owl answered with its staccato syncopation, lustier but no less melancholy.

Then the sound of drunken singing came nearer.

The wind soughed up, drowning it out. But when they heard it again, it was so close to the house that they crouched half terrified under the covers.

"That's right out on the road in front of here——"

Viney grew calm and soothed her.

"Some of them Miggonses, maybe—or one of them Hunnicuts. They ought to be drove out of the county—with their whisky-makin'."

"Viney, I'm afraid!"

"Shall we wake up pappy?"

But as she suggested it, the wild singing in defiant hiccoughy rhythms receded to faintness of vast distance. They were half inclined to believe they had just imagined it. The strain was unfamiliar. They had not made out the words:

Oui, oui, Marie;
If you do *zis* for me
Zen I'll do *zat* for you——

It was gone.

Then some trick of the wind carried it in such a manner that it seemed inside the ruined rail fence not fifty feet away. It burst asunder in a shout the nature of which they could not define. They could not recognize the delirious shout of a soldier rushing atop the summit of a redout. They caught only the note of its crazed savagery. Georgia's teeth were chattering.

"He's headin' right for here—whoever it is—right for our door! Pappy'll kill him—sure——"

"Pshaw! He won't kill him—he won't kill a drunken man—unless he refuses to be drove off."

It seemed incredible to them both that their father's snoring and their mother's puffy breathing should go on as it did. Not a flutter indicated their first restive stirring. The wind lulled all the household save themselves to deeper slumber.

But when the serenade was resumed after its pausing, it had receded to the merest quaver, as if in the chasm of Little White Wing between its hills.

They sat up now, propping their elbows on the quilt. They could hear nothing more—only the little mistrals which swished through the hemlocks, always to sink again to utter stillness.

"I'm a-goin' to slip on my velvet coat and go out and look," announced Viney. "Somebody might be a-hidin' right in the weeds of our garden. Don't wake pappy unless I call."

"Oh, Viney!"

Yet the younger, higher-strung girl was half relieved at her sister's resolve. It would be, after all, a comfort to have somebody look.

"Wrap yourself warm, Viney," she said. "If there's the least sign of anything, just whistle low-like. I'll be ready to wake up pappy."

THEY met at the break in the old fence—Viney and Scawl Tallotuskee.

She had not seen him, and he had not stirred as she crossed the strip of land between the house and the road, searching dauntlessly every step of her way among the rank garden weeds.

Nor did he move as she neared the broken rails and, lifting her eyes, observed him there. She beheld him, mysterious as ever, dim and still as the night dusks in the leaves of the old service tree under which he stood. Invisible until she was so near to him, she could have touched him by reaching out her hand.

"Scawl!" Yet she kept down her voice, and in it was no tremor to betray how startled she had been. "Scawl," she repeated in a whisper, "I might 'a' whistled, and you might 'a' been shot! Pappy would have less mercy on you than on anybody else, Scawl."

He replied, with his characteristic, almost

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ventriloqual quiet, speaking in her own vernacular,

"Somebody's prowlin' round, drunk."

"Once he was very near, Scawl. It must be one of them Miggonses. Their stepmother's people makes it—it's sent two of the boys to the penitentiary for fifteen years—the time pore old Lissie McKenna got shot." She was loquacious, talking against the tumult within her. "Or maybe it's one of that Hunnicut gang——"

"He's wandered down to the valley of the creek," he told her. "He was nighest to you when he woke me up an hour ago—but you didn't hear him then."

"Who do you reckon it can be, Scawl? You Indians know about everything—no matter how far away. You must sleep light as birds."

"He'll lie down somewhere and sleep it off," said Scawl.

She saw she could not move him. If he knew who had menaced her and Georgia's rest, he would never tell her. But she believed he knew.

"Walk with me a little ways, Scawl. The house has nearly got me smothered. They might see or hear us here. You were shadderin' me this evenin', Scawl. You saw Mr. Warren kiss me."

Slowly as shadows that withdraw they moved along the open road toward the hemlocks.

"Hear that wind, Scawl?"

"There'll be rain to-morrow—heaps of rain. It will come late. Maybe not for all the mornin'." Suddenly he turned to her as they neared the black shades where the road dipped downward. "He kissed you. You let him! That means you'll marry him."

"If he asks me to, Scawl, and I refuse, my life at home won't be worth livin'—partic'lar with maw."

"You will marry him if he asks you to, because he can take you far away from here—and show you how folks live in cities—and buy you fine clothes——"

"Oh, Scawl, what difference does it make who I marry? I don't love anybody. I sha'n't never love nobody. I only know that."

"You love me," he said.

She caught her breath.

"Why do you say that? What right have you to say that?"

He made no reply. They moved a little further.

"Often you passed me," he said "and didn't speak—and acted as if you didn't see me. I knew you loved me—from the time of the laurel buds."

"Then—if you know all that, you must know, too, how I could never marry you, Scawl—never until these here old mountains crumble away—like me and Georgia often wish they would."

He was gazing down upon her face, upturned to the burning of his eyes.

"I, too, could take you away from here. I could take you farther than a bird could fly—to the north in the spring—to the south in the fall. I have big lands. My father is old. My father—" He halted. There had been exaltation in his monotone. It left him with the sting of an abrupt remembrance. "No—" he said. "Because I love, I keep forgettin'. You could never marry me—till these mountains crumble away. That may not be as long as it seems," he said, after another long stillness.

"You'll watch over me, Scawl—a little while longer. Sometimes I'm so afraid—I don't know why. You won't let any harm come to me, Scawl—before they crumble. We'll never get the chance to speak to each other like this again—maybe never to speak at all. You'll watch over me, Scawl—won't you? Promise me that."

"*Hwi' lahi*," he murmured, relapsing into his native speech and swaying slightly.

THE meaning was: "Thou must go." But she thought he said, "I promise," and, in misinterpreting him, her intuition was keener than would have been a knowledge of his language.

He would watch over her. Out here in the night that was so black beneath these pines, that steadily wailed louder, grew windier, she felt peace and security. He would keep from her these fears that weakened her acquiescence in destiny.

"This is good-by. It's forever, I reckon, Scawl. Kiss me, Scawl—kiss me—good-by! And you promise—to keep—all harm—from me——"

Reverently his lips brushed her forehead. He drew back, swaying again.

"*Ah — detsinu' lahungu — detsinu' lahungu*," he chanted, and there was moaning in the sounds.

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Sam Smathers spoke to her gently, as a father. "Don't look, Viney honey. It ain't no sight for your eyes." **A tiny sound went from her like the whimper of a child.**

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The words meant: "I tried but failed," but she misinterpreted again, and thought that he said once more, and in some other fashion, "I promise."

Yet when she sought to find excuse in his faint swaying for clasping his head with her supporting arms, he pushed her gently back.

"Good-by, Scawl!"

He made no answer, seeming to sink and melt into the darkness as if it absorbed him. She could not hear his footsteps as he went. She turned back toward the house.

Georgia, with only a shawl thrown over her night-dress, met her, terrified and breathless.

"Oh, Viney! You give me such a scare when you was gone so long. I didn't dare wake anybody up. They'd never forgive me for lettin' you go."

Viney was an iceberg.

"You're mighty easy to scare sometimes, and mighty hard at others. None of you never worries when I'm alone with that Warren feller."

"You're hard on Mr. Warren, Viney. He's awfully in love. Anybody can see it. I believe you want to catch him—even if you're too proud to let on."

"If he asks me to marry him at mail-time to-day, I'll say, 'Yes.' Then may be you and all the family will be satisfied."

There was bitterness in her voice. A bright star swam into an opening of driven clouds. Its light glistened in two great tears in the corner of her eyes.

"And you stayed out like this with—Scawl Tallotuskee? Oh, Viney!"

"I said good-by to him—for always. I know as well as you I can't marry a half-breed. If Mr. Warren proposes to me, I'll have him. He ain't done that yet."

The two tears rolled down, dampening the collar of her velvet coat. Others followed them, but she turned her head so they would not reflect the starlight. She bit her lip and slipped swiftly ahead of her sister, back into the nearer door of the house and under the covers of the bed.

Had Scawl reached the field of the green-corn dance a few minutes earlier, he would have seen the apparition of the White Spoiler, as his stepmother had seen it hours ago. He would have regarded it as the symbol of a finality that no longer mattered—that had never mattered much. As a signal of the possible nearness of his death, he would have welcomed it.

The rider in her toggery of white had first peered out from the shed half full of hay in which she had slept, as far she had slept at all. She, too, had heard the far-away sound of *"Oui, oui, Marie."* She had heard the screech-owl and the hoot-owl.

The singing voice was familiar. She was delighted. Her adventure was better than the most thrilling picture-play she had ever posed, and ridden, and gone without sleep and taken hazards of life and death for.

Her horse was tethered beside the hay-shed. She sprang on its back and galloped once more as far as the group of post-boxes at the ford. She believed the voice was headed in that direction. Anyhow, she was resolved not to relax her vigil there from dawn until the time of the noon mail.

But though she reined her horse and waited patiently, nobody came. The singing and shouting merely grew more distant, to die away at last in the hollows. The wind chilled her. But for its alternate sweep and cessation through the forests, the hour before dawn was like the loneliness in a charnel-pit. Well, sooner or later, and within a few hours, he would be there—playing a lead in her big scene.

Slowly she rode back to the shed, crept again upon the hay and slept—soundly, this time—until the morning was well advanced.

Scawl passed the post-boxes just in time to hear the last muffled thudding of her horse's hoofs before she dismounted beyond the bend of the valley.

THE tale of the great storm that rended the White Wing mountains will be narrated to the grandchildren of those who to-day are children, and to their children after them.

It began brewing, as if from nowhere, in the first pallor of daybreak, after a night so sylvan-still that Diana's maidens, Titania's minions might have trailed in its gossamer milkiness. Rain downpouring at waking-time is a soporific. Sleepers in camp and mountain cabin turn and clutch their pillows more closely. But for hours this morning, and until the unseen sun had passed its meridian, there was no rain—

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none, that is, save infrequent bullet-flings of hard drops, vicious as lava from a crater.

The mountains were battle-fields of forces that know no rest in a vast conflict, with never an issue, that was alternately renewed and desisted from, as if sometimes they wearied ere taking fresh breath.

It was in such a lull that Viney Sneed resolved to risk the lightning and the falling trees and keep her appointment for mail-time with Mr. Warren. The flurries of scant hard rain she did not mind. They were but occasional, and harmless as a fling of pebbles from the hand of one of her toddling brothers. The wind she had always loved. It cooled the sunburn on her cheeks.

"Maybe you'd better not go, Viney," her mother had said. But Jiles, her father, already had started out in this wind at daybreak—to his latest job at the Nattahala logging works, scorning the tortured trees and the lightning as he would have scorned an April shower.

She was her father's daughter. Georgia was her mother's.

Moreover, Mrs. Sneed's remonstrances had been very half-hearted. Rich suitors from the city, representing the glint of visions inarticulate but golden, were heaven-sent. They must not be offended.

Viney had miscalculated. The lull that gave her confidence was but the breath-taking of the tumult ere it gathered its slackened mutterings with titanic concentration. The downpour, withheld throughout the morning, broke like something hungry that had restrained itself merely to gloat over and to goad a world it seemed to devour.

It fell in glazed sheets of driven wetness.

The *gule'gi*, the climber to the high places, he who had waited and watched, clinging like blue fungus to the surface of Bald Stone, fifteen hundred feet above the post-boxes, was drenched within the fraction of a minute.

THE white stranger of the smiling, lying eyes had not yet come. He dozed late, no doubt sleeping off his drunkenness under the driven sky. But something clairvoyant gave Scawl Tallotuskee implicit belief that he would be there, that Viney, too, would be there, that the time of testing the man was at hand, as was the keeping of the promise his heart had made, though his lips had not formed it.

He strained his beaten gaze into the black-sheeted gale.

There came a glare that filled the open bowl below him from the earth to the pitchy skies—staying, as it seemed, the very waters as they fell. It struck the rock so close to where he lay that, amid the roaring deafness in his ears, he thought it must have been split asunder.

But with the temporary loss of his hearing, well-nigh of his consciousness, there had been compensation in the giving-back to him of his sight.

And in that flare of the torch of the thunder-god, he saw him—saw the man crawling out from the tangle of laurel on the Bald Stone side of the creek sheer beneath him, saw him stagger toward the maddened stream that frothed at the ford as with the lips of epilepsy.

He lost Warren then in another blur which tore and hissed as it pounded him to his sentry-station on the rock.

Then it was that he saw, or believed he saw, that which he had made oath to himself he would never let come to pass. There was but the flash of the girl—the gleam of white, lost sight of almost ere seen, behind the blur of laurel and rhododendron on the farther bank, torn and tangled by the storm.

But there had been, too, a gleam of hair like maple leaves when they have turned to yellow in the autumn. That was his talisman of identification.

As for the man, he saw him throughout quite plainly. Like a nameless, unclean thing, this man had floundered half clad through the creek and climbed up the bank on the further side. He was bending forward, his arms compressed about other arms that would be struggling. The laurels closed about them both.

Through the turmoil of boiling waters came the sound of a woman's shriek—a piercing scream. Another shriek—more stifled. Then the long-drawn silence that seemed unbroken by the churning of White Wing that the ear took for granted. The rain had stopped, wearily, as something that has devoured its prey and sated itself.

But the unclean thing staggered back out of the laurels. It stood an instant in its tracks, like something bewildered. It

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stumbled backward, reeling. It crumpled to its knees by the first of the post-boxes, its arms bent tautly back, clutching for support behind it.

There was but one thing for Scawl to do. No doubt of this thing he must do shadowed his resolve. He had seen with his own eyes. You killed rattlesnakes, and you killed such men as this. The whites themselves killed such men as this.

He rose to a stooping posture, supporting himself on his haunches. He lifted his rifle and took aim.

His bullet went wild. As he fired—or it may have been an instant before he fired—a sharp sting like a knife-thrust split his wrist. A second bullet pierced his back, imbedding itself somewhere in the muscles of his shoulder.

He fell sidewise. The rock slanted in that direction toward where the trees below Bald Stone found dizzy footing amid the naked shale. He strove to twine his fingers and grapple. But the one shoulder was sticky with red, and the hand of his other arm was lamed.

In the daze from his loss of blood, he seemed to hear the words of an old Cherokee love-song—as if runed in an incantation of death:

I have but stayed your hand—O my beloved!
I have seen the White Spoiler, who rides beneath the moon.
We are doomed for this life.
But I have stayed the curse of the Great Spirit against him who is the slayer of elder brother.
I have stayed the curse of the white man.
I have stayed the curse which bars to us the happy hunting-ground—
O my beloved—my lover brave
Willed—unwilling—unto me—for all the days of the happy hunting-ground!

The deliberated Cherokee chant was a buzzing lamentation about his head. It had the aspect of unholy sorcery. A tree directly in his descent had barred his further falling with a blow that seemed to crush in his ribs. He hung limply about it.

He opened his eyes. It was the squaw of his foster-father who bent over him, crooning the sorcery of her tearless Indian song. She was drenched. The heavy shawl which muffled the whimpering of the papoose tied to her back was drenched.

Wearied with her steep climb and the deed she had done and her baby's weight, she drooped above him. But the spark of earthly passion was steady in the wavering with which she met his stare.

She had laid down her rifle. It slid down the glassy wet shale and buried itself among the boughs. She made no attempt to recover it. It had done its final work.

He squirmed at the proffered benediction of her hands. The woman was unclean—and even in death she sought to deceive him with idle lies sown among the squaws by the toothless one—the poisoner of his women.

She was tearing at wet moss with which to stanch his wounds. He shrank again from her groping hands.

"I say—don't touch me!" he bade her, managing to rise half upright with a sudden power of forced strength. "You know—nobody knows better—that the stranger I watched and tried to slay because he deserved it was no brother of mine. You would deceive me, even in death, with the stale chatter of squaws. You are a bad woman and a fool who believes I don't know who I am or from whence I came. I shall not die. I shall find my way back down to the valley and out of the mountains. Go!"

The squaw stood now proudly erect, burdened by her child. Her look still rested upon him, but she turned slowly with twisting mouth. She pulled herself upward with a low-hanging bough, like one who mounts a ladder by rungs studded with nail-points.

The rain had ceased. Through the dripping of soaked leaves he heard her through his dreams, finding the upwinding trail that led round the boulder, in the long arc of a bow, down to the creek.

After that, a tender murmuring caressed him, and music of unheard-of sweetness.

MAYFIELD found Dumbarton Warren while his men were still searching in the other direction of the compass. Hands outstretched on either side behind him clutched one of the post-boxes, torn from its joisting by his weight. His body had sagged forward like some crucified victim of war wrenched by its weight from the nails. There was still a fluttering in his lungs; but as Mayfield ripped away the tattered remant of his undershirt, his breath rasped, gurgled and went out.

A letter had fallen from the box and been

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trampled in the mud by Mayfield himself when he stampeded toward the dying man from the foot-log. He did not find it until after he had found the pistol in the mire and dragged Warren's body from the mud of the roadway to the wet green sward and folded the arms across the breast. It was unstamped, and directed to himself.

He held the mud-soaked, unopened message, dumbly wondering, not at the strange labored writing, not at this especial tragedy, but rather at the mystery, the meaning, or meaninglessness, of all things—since the days when his father, dying, had doled out to him every detail of that romance which had not touched his own young life and had preceded his birth.

He looked up from where he kneeled, holding the letter. The young squaw of old Tallotuskee stood gazing. Her papoose whimpered at her back.

She addressed him in the Cherokee she knew he understood.

"You need not read—it is too late. I wrote and asked you to guard your brother against his own destruction through his love for the pink-face woman. I thought he was ignorant of his claim on you—on you who are his nearest of kin. I was wrong. I could not deceive him. He lies broken in pieces on the mountainside. It was not he who slew this man."

He thought she meant that she herself had done this thing. He seized her wrists mercilessly. Had she not been of her race, she would have cried aloud.

"*Gi'ga-tsuhali,*" he demanded; "bloody of mouth, what are you telling me, what have you done?"

In apathy of the pain, she made a slight movement of her head in the direction of Bald Stone.

"Go to your kinsman if you will. He lies up there."

He dropped her wrists.

As if repeated against his ear, the words of his father came back to him:

"You are younger than this half-breed boy—but don't ever let 'em hound him, Bole, little son. His mother was my wife before I married your own mother—my wife and sweetheart, little son. Their medicine-man had secretly married us. She thought I'd become an outcast if we let folks know. She knew I couldn't make a livin' anywheres but in these mountains. We couldn't go away together. I was too ignorant and helpless. It's clear to me now why she done what she did, though it nigh broke me at the time. She got herself married to that old Cherokee criminal by a circuit-ridin' parson before the boy was born. That made it legal in the law. I reckon our Indian marriage was jest legal with God—Bole, little son."

The squaw was regarding him fixedly. She turned away as she spoke:

"Go to him if you will. He still lives."

"*Ungini'li*" he called back to her. "My elder brother—I know—I know——"

He was rushing headlong into the ford of Sneeds' Knob, toward the mountain of Bald Stone.

"Half-way up," called back the woman's voice behind him, still in Cherokee, "by the big oak that marks the Bald Stone border."

Then she moved, bent as if she bore a millstone, toward the path through the field of the green-corn dance—toward the new house of old, old Scawl Tallotuskee in the hollow behind the low hill.

OVER Viney Sneed the rain had burst, but not before its pounding impact on the padded hemlock boughs above her had given her warning. A hundred yards ahead of her lay parts of a huge chestnut tree that had slid down from heights above in some such storm as this and been arrested by the bracket of the road. Jiles Sneed had had to saw it into sections and roll them out of the way of his team. One hollow end had become embedded like a guard-rail at the edge of the drop.

Viney ran toward this log. For all her plumpness and complacence, she had, when roused, the swiftness of a deer.

It might be she had chosen a refuge that was a target. She had heard that wood "drew lightnin'." But lightning had struck this tree already while it sentineled the peak of Sneed's Knob, and lightning never struck the same place twice. Recalling this, she felt secure—too secure.

Would it not be a fitting end to be killed in here and not to be found for a long time by her family? To crouch here, snug and undiscovered, even in death?

Still, the hold of life was strong. On the bark-stripped surface above her head the

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ammunition of a machine gun might have been beating, aimed from the sky. Particles of the decayed wood were shaken over her white dress. She had to keep her eyes tight shut to keep them from being blinded by powdery borings of wood-worms.

Then the storm lulled. A great contentment stole over her.

Maybe her mother and sister and father were right in longing to see her married to Mr. Warren and living in a great, fine city. To the eye he was pleasing rather than repulsive. His voice was nice when he read aloud, though he spoiled it sometimes by seeming to know it. Maybe she could learn to endure his caresses. Women had to learn to endure such things from men. Her mother had told her so. It was just as bad to be married to one man as to another.

But—maybe he would not ask her to marry him—maybe he had never even meant to ask her. Maybe——

She felt no longer sheltered. She felt smothered with humiliation.

The rain was ceasing now. The wet-padded hemlocks dripped on the long, monotonous drop, drop, drop, drop. She began to count them—one, two, three, four. It was like the ticking of time in the long, long seconds that would go on and on in a life from which the yearning of one's heart had been renounced.

The encroaching chill deadened her to the freezing-point. It vanished abruptly in a hot wave of anger.

Who could make her marry anybody? Was she not her own mistress? Were there not eight other Sneed children for experiment with the family ambitions? And there would be yet more. One was born every year or so. Why should she marry *anybody?*

Somehow or other she could struggle her way out of this imprisonment and live where old maids were not so looked down on.

She crept to the open end of the log and peered out.

The rain had ceased. There was nothing but the drop, drop everywhere, like a sound-mirage of the storm that had passed.

She would keep her appointment at the ford. If Warren should be there and ask her to marry him, she would *refuse him flatly* If he tried to kiss her again, she would forbid him the right even to recognize her or to speak to her.

But if he persisted. If——

The cowed humiliation swept over her again. She moved starkly, picking her slow way downward about the puddles and runnels in the miry wheel-tracks. Over her had come at last clear understanding. It heated her forehead beneath her sun-burn-tawny hair as if a hot iron were pressed upon it.

They were fools—maw, pappy, even Georgie—all of them fools! *He had never meant to marry her!* He hadn't even dreamed of such a thing. Why had the truth not been clear like this before?

Well, she would keep her appointment, anyhow. She was not alone. One little summons from her—and one would appear who would show this "gentleman"—this would-be seducer——

Another sort of chill came over her as she crossed the foot-log of the ford.

FOUR or five men stood motionless in a little semicircle, their eyes glued to something on the ground. Sam Smathers had dismounted and held his horse by the rein. The others were in overalls or ragged clothes. Some of them were hatless. They stood as if conjured on the spot, mysteriously summoned from the soil they tilled, the cabins that sheltered them, by the telepathy of tragedy.

When they saw Viney coming toward them with dilated eyes, they closed round the prone object, hiding it as if by a preconcerted signal. Sam Smathers spoke to her gently, as a father.

"Don't look, Viney honey. It ain't no sight for your eyes."

A tiny sound went from her like the whimper of a child. She caught it by main force ere it became a keening wail.

"It ain't—it ain't—Scawl Tallotuskee, is it? He ain't been hurt—has he?"

"No, Viney; it ain't Scawl—it's a friend of yourn."

But Viney had lost interest to the point where she did not hear him. Her eye had wandered back in the direction of the foot-log she had just crossed. From the soaked jungle of dog-hobble in the swampy ground to the right of it, two figures were emerging.

"Steady, Scawl boy!" she heard Mayfield saying. "Steady, old man!"

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He practically carried the wounded half-breed in his two arms, and the task absorbed him. The point of exhaustion had been nearly reached with both. Mayfield saw no one. His eyes were fixed on those of his burden with infinite tender compassion.

"Steady, Scawl boy—once we get you across the foot-log, everything'll be all right. Sam Smathers will be along soon. Plenty of help—once we get to the post-boxes——"

Viney did not control her cry now. Before they had observed Boleman or heard him, the men saw her hurl herself toward the ford. She seemed about to wade headlong into it.

One of them caught her and held her back. She turned on him like a pantheress with claws. None of them had ever seen her blond face other than placid before. It was all but demoniac.

"Let me go!" she screamed. "Damn you white men that think yourselves the salt of the earth! Let me go!"

"It's jest that ye needn't get soppin' wet and take cold, Viney. There's a foot-log ye can cross to get to Boleman." But the words were conciliatory, apologetic, frightened.

They let go and held off from her, too amazed to be shocked at the primeval brutality that was dislodged in one catapultic frenzy from sources of her half-civilized being. Her reason prevailed only enough to carry her feet with the swiftness of an antelope across the foot-log.

She had reached Mayfield and his burden ere the men had begun to follow. She caught the staggering figure with a grip of her arms that had the superstrength of an Amazon. She lowered Scawl's body, kneeling to the ground, covering the face and the closing eyelids with kisses.

"Scawl," she rambled brokenly, straining his head to her breast, "have they hurt you Scawl—have they killed you at last—Scawl—no, no, Scawl—they haven't killed you, have they? Oh, Scawl, you've got to live—Bole and me will keep you alive—you've got to live—for Bole and me!"

IT WILL be told to grandchildren of those who are children how the woman of yellow hair, who looked like tinted lithographs hung in the stores of Stoversville, came into the town by mail-hack one day, and rode forth before nightfall dressed in white riding-garments that might have been designed for a costume in some picture-pageantry—some exaggerated make-believe of reality.

Her horse came back riderless. She was heard from no more, unless the tardy account of two young wagoners—ex-soldiers from France—is to be credited. Long afterward they claimed to have come upon a drenched, bleached woman in white, staggering from the woods to the deep mire of the road which lead to the railroad town of Andrews. They gave her a lift as far as the last field before the factories on the outskirts, where she insisted on climbing down with the assurance that she could look after herself. She gave them for their silence a pulpy mass of ten-dollar bills, and they conscientiously kept their oaths of secrecy to her—for six months or so.

And they will tell, also, when they speak of the great storm, of the squaw and her papoose found stretched out dead before night, when the skies were clear again. And of old Tallotuskee, of the many wives, who had jibbered beside their bodies in front of the new dwelling he had built—jibbered horrible words and laughter:

"He, he, he! She no squaw mine—that no papoose mine! He, he, he! That papoose born after she try to make my son Scawl jealous with other Indian man. He, he, he!"

They carried away the old Cherokee, jibbering thus in his toothless senility.

But the part of the tale that to-day they will only whisper is of the white girl with as good blood as any of all the mountain country in her veins. Of how, ruthless of scandal, protected by the man Mayfield as by a brother, she helped him nurse the half-breed back to health.

She has married the half-breed and gone far away, and the Tallotuskee lands are sold. It is told as yet only in whispers on White Wing, because of the parents and the grown sister Georgia and the little brothers and sisters still in the cabin on Sneed's Knob.

For by old conventions, which pass slowly, but yet are passing day by day, the parents still deem themselves disgraced, and the vanished daughter's name never may be mentioned in their presence.

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Projectitis

Should Children Have Freedom? "No!" Thundered John. They Should Be Subject to Law from the Beginning. Read How the Experiment Worked Out in This Case.

By Fannye Jordan Treaster

JOHN OLIVER, coatless, collarless, beslippered, dug *his* magazine from the pile in the rack, lit a strong cigar, tossed the match into the glowing, sparkling coals of the grate, pulled up his favorite chair and sank into it.

It was Sunday afternoon. March snorted, raged and whistled without. Here John, full as to tummy, settled himself to loll in the luxury of a quiet Sunday afternoon at home. A staid and successful attorney at law, one would suspect that John's reading dissipation would be a law journal or the latest Supreme Court report. It was not. *His* magazine, always kept at the bottom, away from the critical eye, was a detective-story magazine.

Presently his wife, Alice, came into the room, dressed as she had come from church, her nose freshly powdered, her hair brushed up. She was prepared if any one should happen to— Not that she was fond of these Sunday afternoons at home. However, she had no love for the March lion—freckles, you know.

She seated herself with bored resignation on the edge of the chair next her husband, looked at him, saw the quality of his reading-matter and gave a sigh. Finally she said,

"Good sermon, to-day; wasn't it, John?"

"Mm hm."

"He certainly did hit some of our best people."

"Mm hm."

"Did you notice Grace Spears? She squirmed and squirmed, and I'm sure she blushed when Dr. Graves mentioned the 'demons in the cellar.' "

"Got what's coming to her."

"But, John, I said, 'Grace Spears.' I thought you liked her!"

"Who? The minister? Do. Fine man!"

"You said, 'The minister.' You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know a thing I said. My! You're good company." John remained silent. Not even an argument could she elicit. So she rose impatiently, went to the magazine-rack and, half-heartedly selecting one, returned to her seat and began to scan its pages idly. Finally her eyes were arrested by an article, and she began to read.

Having read and reread parts of the article, Alice looked up.

"John! Listen! It says here——"

"Uh huh."

"John! Can't you spare me a moment of your most valuable time?"

The sarcasm of her tone gave John an inkling that the limit had been reached.

"Yes, dear," came his more responsive tone.

"For heaven's sake put up that trash! A man of your intelligence!"

"Just one more paragraph, dear."

Alice waited impatiently while he finished. Finally he looked up with as atisfied smile, stretched his arms and legs and said:

"Good story! Mighty good story! Now, little one, what is it?"

"It says here that only three per cent. of the people in the world are really successful. The reason given is the lack of freedom in childhood. Too many parents have careers mapped out for their children before they are out of the cradle. There is

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constant repression of the natural inclination, instinct and talent. Consequently, when they arrive at maturity, they become drudges, working without aim, merely trying to earn enough to keep them from poverty or, perhaps, enough to tide them over old age. It says that children are individuals and have a right to steer their own courses. They should be allowed freedom to select their own careers, to pick their own projects."

JOHN, wary dispenser of the law that he was, took a few puffs of his strong cigar and answered, with habitual deliberateness:

"Tommy rot! All tommy rot! We must teach and practise repression. Every one is governed more or less by law, either natural or statutory. Everything would be in a state of chaos if we didn't have law. And children should be taught the value of law and the necessity for conforming to laws from the very beginning."

"Oh, John, it's just like you to take the wrong view-point. Of course, it doesn't mean that they'd be allowed to steal and commit murder."

"It would come to that. People ungoverned would stop at nothing to gain the things they wanted. Look at the primitive man!"

"It doesn't mean the doing-away with laws. It means that children are domineered by their elders—that they are allowed no mental or bodily freedom. And it's true. I remember, when I was little, I was never allowed to do the thing I wanted. It was always: 'Alice, the idea of your climbing fences! A little girl!' 'Alice, don't you dare let me catch you swinging from that bar again!' 'Alice Moore! Little girls don't turn handsprings! Come in this instant. Act like a little lady. Play with your dolls.' So I sat by the window and played with dolls, watching other children doing the things——"

John's laugh interrupted her.

"I suppose, then, according to the project method, you should have been an acrobat."

Alice blushed and demurred.

"John! I might have been an athletic director or something. I've always been fond of athletics. Perhaps dolls *are* good training for motherhood, provided the child *wants* to play with them. Some boys like to play with dolls, too. Why don't they train boys for fatherhood by making them, if it's all right?"

At this, John laughed until he shook the magazine from his lap.

"Train boys for fatherhood! That's a good one!"

"Oh, well, you can laugh if you want to, but what's fair for one is fair for the other. I know that forced training makes misfit mothers. Take me, for instance. I'm not a successful mother, though I'm sure very few would admit as much. If I were, Junior'd be a more contented child."

"Nonsense, Alice! No child is ever contented. The only trouble with you is that you're too indulgent."

"Oh, well, I hate to see him disappointed. He always takes it so hard. And he did want those rabbits so badly. Since I've read that article, I hate it worse than ever. Perhaps we are helping to make him into one of the ninety-seven-per-cent. misfits by this very denial. But rabbits are such dirty things!"

"Of course they are. And he'd not take care of them. It'd be up to me to feed and water them after the first day or two."

"I don't believe it would be that way, John, if it's really the thing he wants to do. And he seemed so enthusiastic—told us more about rabbits and rabbit-raising than I've heard in all my life."

"Yes." John laughed. "According to him, I'd be paid back my five-dollar investment in two weeks, and in six weeks we'd be multimillionaires."

"Supposing he—that is, supposing it were the thing he's fitted for—what kind of business—I mean, profession——"

"That would be some profession! 'John Oliver, Junior, The Great Rabbitician!' Wouldn't we be proud of our son?"

"That would sound funny," she answered seriously, "And we did so want him to take over your law practise. But the article says that if you're doing the thing for which you're fitted, you are happy and enthusiastic. Your work is as play. And we do want our Junior to be happy."

"Well, five dollars is too much. What does he want with prize Belgian hares? I can get all I want for fifty cents a pair."

"It wouldn't hurt to try it, would it?"

"Perhaps it wouldn't bother *you* much."

Alice didn't say another word. She allowed her magazine to drop upon her

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knees, then turned her head and looked away over a slightly raised shoulder.

John Oliver didn't pretend to be cognizant of women or anything foreign to statutes, but, someway—perhaps it was through some automatic impression on his brain-cells—he had learned to respond to certain signals of Alice's blue eyes. When she was pleased or in a happy mood, her eyes sparkled like blue lakes. When she approached him, head cocked to one side, eyes downcast, he knew it was a twenty-five-dollar hat or another lamp for the living-room. When she looked straight at him, he scratched his brain to recall what breach of family law or etiquette he had committed. But when she looked away from him over a slightly raised shoulder, he knew instinctively that the battle was ended and he might as well raise aloft his white flag.

"I haven't any change, Alice—have you? I'll pay you back. Go call Junior. But be sure to tell him that ab-so-lutely I shall not be responsible for their care."

Instantly Alice's eyelids lifted to display pools of sparkling blue.

"I'll call him, John dear," she said, rising and giving her husband's cheek a loving pat. "I'll call him, and I'm sure he'll be only too glad to look after the rabbits."

THUS the project method was established in earnest in the Oliver household. Not only did Junior get his prize Belgian hares but a substantial rabbit-house and -pen. Nor did the establishment of the new method stop at this. It was to be given an extensive and thorough trial. So Junior was never refused an extra piece of pie or the second or third helping of pudding. The apples disappeared without protest, and the cake-jar was always empty. And the maid had to be bribed with two dollars extra out of Alice's allowance, because Junior insisted upon bringing "them pesky things" in the house—though Alice herself did not relish turning her abode into a rabbitry, Jacky, junior must not be curbed!

At the next meeting of the Mothers' Help Club, Alice gave a talk in which she endorsed the project method with the enthusiasm of one who presents a tried and tested recipe. That evening was born the project method in many other households.

Staid John alone was unmoved.

"But, John," she'd say, making a renewed effort to convince him, "Junior is a perfect angel. He's so happy and contented—never storms and cries at all any more."

"Why should he?" the skeptic would return, "Why should he? Has everything his own way—everything he wants."

A few days passed, and Alice had to remind her son one day that his pets were unfed. The lad complied a bit grudgingly.

The next day was Saturday. Alice had to hurry away early that morning to look after an all-day bake-sale for the church in one of the down-town department stores. It was after dark when she returned. Something prompted her to inquire after the welfare of her young son's rabbits. The boy answered a bit sulkily that he'd forgotten. Alice was dead tired, having stood on her feet all day, but she went out and fed the poor bunnies by flash-light.

Sunday was a busy day for Alice. She brought some guests home from church, and they did not leave until evening. Junior had only been in the house long enough for his meals and, finally, the protesting hour of night—bedtime. So it was Monday morning, when she was giving him his before-school scrubbing, that she remembered to put the question. No; he hadn't. Had he on Sunday? No; he'd forgotten.

"You must feed your rabbits, Junior, or—" Before she realized it, she had broken a rule and was ordering the enforcement of a law.

"Aw! I don't have time," protested the lad, with a scowl. "I'm tired of 'em, anyway. Too much trouble! I'm gonna give 'em to Speck O'Hearn, the washwoman's boy. He c'n raise 'em. They're poor an' need the money. Besides, Mig Garret an' me are fixin' up a printin' plant in his garage. Gonna make lots o' money printin' a paper. I'm gonna buy the printin' stuff, 'cause Mig's furnishin' the garage."

Alice stopped short as she was about to tackle a many-caverned ear.

"Why, Junior, I thought you——"

"You c'n ask dad," the lad continued in an of-course-it's-settled tone. "You tell him we don't want a 'spensive one to start with—maybe ten or fifteen dollars."

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"Why, Junior, that's lots of money! Besides, your father just paid out about ten dollars for your rabbits and rabbit-house—" Just then a happy thought struck her. Shouldn't she be pleased at this change of project? That rabbit one was not very promising, anyway. Going into the printing business! Why, that was a real project! Benjamin Franklin had been a printer. So had President Harding and Governor Cox. This was wonderful! Her son, her own Junior, a diplomatist, a president—at least a governor! No doubt he was destined for great things. Ask his father? Well, I guess, yes. Even he must see the worth-whileness of this project.

It was some time before she realized that her son was talking.

"Mig c'n get the paper. Dad c'n give us an ad, an' Mig's father, an' we c'n get some more, an' we c'n soon pay dad back. You tell him."

As Alice adjusted her son's tie, she gave the smooth cheek a happy kiss.

That evening, after dinner, being assured that her spouse was thoroughly satisfied and comfortable, in glowing terms and with sparkling eyes Alice presented the new project. But even the Franklin-Harding-Cox argument failed to stir him. "Just another fad," he told her. So in the end, she used the eyes-thrown-over-the-shoulder tactic and he grudgingly submitted to bleeding.

"Money I was saving to get the car painted," he informed her.

"That's all right, dear. The car doesn't look so bad, and this is *far more important*—our Junior's future!"

ONCE more Utopia reigned. The printing-press was the thing of the hour. Alice aided and abetted the new project as much as was in her power—telling Junior the kind of news he should print, explaining the ethics of the press, that is, concerning libel and so forth, helping to secure and arrange ads, even going so far as to compose bits of poetry, to be printed, naturally, without the author's signature.

This went on for nearly a month. The first edition was not yet off the press. Alice gave no serious thought to this until she began to be besieged with inquiries from every quarter: "Thought Junior was going to print a paper." "How is Junior getting along with his printing business?" "Must be something pretty big to take so long." And some even hinted gently that they were a little concerned because of small sums invested in advertising and advanced for subscriptions.

About the latter, she was a bit peeved. On the other hand, nothing was ever accomplished in a day. They ought to give the child time. Yet he had no right to collect money in advance. She did not like that. She'd speak to the young gentleman that evening. But when Junior came in that day after school, she was confronted with:

"Hey! Mother! Know what I'm gonna do?"

Alice's heart gave a violent leap.

"No, dear. What is it?"

"I'm gonna make a radio set. All the kids's got one. They're easy to make—get music and speeches from Pittsburgh, New York and every place——"

For a moment the mother's senses were dulled. A new project! The protest that followed was automatic.

"But, Junior, your printing-press!"

"Aw! It's no good. Every copy we printed was blotted and blurred so you couldn't read 'em. We couldn't get no news. Mig wanted to do all the printin' while I got the news, an' he was the worst printer. Besides, his father tol' us to get our junk outa his garage—said it took up all the room an' he had to leave his car out all night. It's all right, mother. I'll not be losers none. Brick Jones is gonna trade me a dandy condenser for it an' I won't hafta make one."

"But it cost your father so much money, and he'll storm."

"No, he won't, mumsy. Don't you remember he said it was just a fad and I'd get tired of it?

So! Her son wasn't to be a Franklin or a President Harding or a Jimmy Cox after all. Why not? She had to think—to do some reasoning. Did these men become famous because of the erstwhile printing business? Wasn't it possible that they had been misfits? Did all printers become famous? Certainly not! Most printers remained printers all their lives. These men had become famous in spite of the printing business. They had the strength of character to rise above it. Presidents and statesmen are not constructed of

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printers. Strange she hadn't seen it in this light before! So wasn't he lucky to get out of it in time?

This new project—radio. Why, this was really worth while. It was in its infancy. Wouldn't it be fine for Junior to go into it so young and grow with it? The field was a wide one. Plenty of room at the top. For just a second she experienced a little quivery feeling that this, too, might be a fad. But wasn't it quite natural, after having been stifled so long in his projects, that he should flounder round a bit before he could get his bearings? Perfectly. Radio! Junior was, at last, steering along the right course.

Alice Oliver was not one of these women whose reasoning plunged deep. Her son's earnest, eager eyes were the most convincing argument with which she could be confronted. And the little imp, very early in life, learned his mother's long-suffering qualities as concerned himself.

Evening came, and the family was seated at the dinner-table. John knew something was coming. Alice's eyes told him that. It was not to be a demand but a plea. He could read that. Junior was connected with it. He could gather that. However, he waited for her to begin.

"Wonderful thing, this radio!" she told him finally, while picking at her lettuce with her fork.

"Yes; all the kids's got one," nibbed in Junior, with a rush.

"So! That was it. Radio!" thought John, nodding his head as he did so. Then he said aloud,

"But *you're* not going to get one."

"Why not?" the two exclaimed simultaneously.

"Because you're not!"

"But, John, it's——"

"Aw, dad, just a cheap one——"

"I've spent the last cent I'm going to on your and your mother's nonsense!"

"How can you call it 'nonsense' when it means your son's future, his education?"

"Yes, daddy; that's it. You want me to learn—to be educated, don't you?"

"Fads are not educationl."

"I'm sure, John, this is not a fad. Just think of the advantage—growing up with this new science."

"I am growin'; ain't I, dad?"

"You two can argue till doomsday. I'm not going to spend another cent on this damn-foolishness—not another cent. Understand?"

"John! You're talking before your son!"

"Please, daddy."

"N-o!" he thundered.

Junior left the table, storming and bellowing, while Alice proceeded to enact the over-shoulder stunt. But John Oliver was adamant.

HOWEVER, that determined mother was not beaten by any means. She took part of the money with which she had expected to buy a new spring suit, and the radio project was in motion.

Junior bought radio equipment, gathered radio magazines, clipped radio news and had radio experts tracking through the house with muddy feet, made it dangerous for a person to try for the garage on a dark night because of radio wire, kept his mother shelling out over and above the original purchase until she saw spring hat and spring shoes take wings along with her suit. But it was worth it to see her son working along such worth-while lines. When she thought he might have been a rabbitician or a common, ordinary printer, she felt amply repaid for her sacrifice.

She couldn't find a sympathetic audience in John, and she was just bursting with the glory of her son's chosen career; so she presented it by paper to the Mothers' Help Club. Of course, no one of that body could give to the world another John, junior, but she was generous enough to allow them an insight into her successful method. Her subject was: "Radio-Learning for the Child." She talked in technical terms of tuning-coils, amplifiers, aerials, meter-waves and so forth. She wasn't quite sure what it was all about. Neither was her audience, for that matter. However, she was rewarded by their enthusiastic response. They were advised to apply certain tests before deciding upon the radio project; for the project was the primary factor, and, naturally, must be of the child's own choosing. After the meeting had adjourned, Alice was besieged with questions, and she was fully aware of her importance as well as her son's.

That evening, in many households, an unsuspecting child was put through the radio-test—examination passed—then came

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the endurance-test—mother versus father and the family purse-strings.

One day, while Junior was in school, Alice went to his room to change his bed. She stopped for a moment where his radio outfit was being installed. Such an intricate array of meaningless bits of—well, things that met her eyes! A radio magazine lay open upon the table with several marked paragraphs exposed. Radio clippings were strewn about. Beside the magazine was a sketch or drawing of some sort. He was going about his business beautifully, systematically. She was stirred to tears over the magnitude of her son's undertaking. She was more convinced than ever that he had hit upon the real project. She was glad, glad, glad about the suit and the hat and the shoes.

When she returned to the kitchen, she gave the maid implicit instructions that she was not to touch a thing on Junior's radio-table.

A WEEK later, Alice decided she'd take a peep to see how Junior's radio was progressing. It gave her a tiny thrill to enter this sanctum of sanctums. To think she'd be able to hear concerts, lectures and sermons in distant cities on an instrument of her own son's making!

As she neared the corner where this wonder-feat was being accomplished, her heart gave a little leap. A most terrible fear seized her. Could it be? Yes; it had been a week. She had been so busy in the interim. Upon closer examination, her fears were woefully confirmed. Everything was exactly the same as it had appeared the week before. She sat, or, rather, flopped, in the chair before the table. She needed to collect her wits, to think. Surely this couldn't mean anything. Only a week!

"If it does, well—well, I've spanked him before. No, no; it can't be. Only a week! Only a week! How silly of me! I can't expect the little thing to work all the time. Maybe, he's waiting for some more material. That's it. He's afraid to ask for more money. Poor lad!"

Thus assured, she cast off her moment of fear. She'd tell him that evening that if it was more money, he could have it.

Junior did not turn up that evening until his parents were seated at the dinner-table. He came in with a rush.

"Hey! Know what I'm gonna do?"

Alice's heart gave a violent leap, then lay fluttering. John sensed a situation which needed a legal mind.

"What's that? What's that? Another project? I can tell you right now, before you go any farther, there's not going to be another one."

"Aw, mother, he thinks it's gonna cost a lotta money, an' it's not. Mother, you will, won't you——"

"I'll have something to say to that, too. Neither is your mother to finance another deal."

"Aw, shucks! You'd think it was gonna cost a lot. Fleas don't cost anything. All you need's a good dog."

"What's that? What's that?" demanded the father.

"Well, I was thinkin'—if I had a good dog, I could raise some fleas an' train 'em. I read 'bout a fellow out in California who trained 'em good."

The father's expression changed. His eyes began to twinkle. The boy was quick to sense the change into a sympathetic and understanding audience. He seated himself at the table beside his father and continued eagerly:

"I got it all figured out, dad. Get a good Airedale. Jim Greer's got a dandy—good as Laddie Boy, an' he'll let me have 'im for only twenty-five dollars. The man out in California that trained 'em let 'em live offen his wrist. But I figured that a good dog could raise 'em just as good. 'Course, I might train one or two offen my wrist. When I get 'em trained good, I c'n have a regular flea circus—acrobats, trapeze, 'n everything. And maybe I won't make some money!"

John's abdomen seemed afflicted with uncontrollable upheavals.

"Say, son—that's the first real idea you've had. Let me in on this one. Your mother's had chance at partnership in all the others. Isn't it my turn?" And he shot a sly wink at the silent woman who was *looking straight at him*. He continued:

"That surely is about the cleverest idea, Jack. I'll say that we'll be proud of you. We'll have some big posters lithographed—'See Jacko, the Greatest Living Flea-Trainer and his Jumping, Galloping, Cavorting Fleas, Almost Human in their Intelligence—the Wonder of the Universe!

Everybody's Magazine, March, 1923

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Don't Fail to See Jacko!' Of course, they'd have to have the freedom of the house in non-working seasons, for, no doubt, they'd be temperamental."

"An', yes, dad; have a big tent an' plenty of magnifying glasses for the people to see."

"We'd fix that. Have them perform under a magnifying glass. And you'd let your old dad be barker? You know—the man that stands out in front and gets the people coming. And, perhaps, your mother could stand beside me on the platform to show off the valuable dog which raises them—the wonderful fleas. Dress her in a beautiful dress of red and green satin, and all full of spangles and shiny beads."

All during this discourse, Alice had sat motionless. In fact, she had hardly moved an eyelash since she saw her son come in, give his hat a toss without waiting to see that it had alighted upon one of his mother's treasured hand-painted candles on the buffet, saw him sit at the table with the earthiest of hands and face and uncombed hair, heard every word that passed between him and his father. Yet not a sound did she make, not a word did she utter. However, when it came to the caricature John had pictured of her, she could stand no more. Jumping violently to her feet, she pushed back her chair and fled in a rage from the room.

John began to laugh—a deep, hearty, penetrating laugh.

Junior, however, stared wide-eyed and open-mouthed after the retreating figure of his mother.

"What's the matter with mother?" he asked bewildered.

"Nothing much. Ho! Ho! That's too good!" the father answered between laughs and gasping for breath. "Nothing much—nothing but an acute attack of projectitis."

An insistent knocking and beating was heard above John's laughter at the back door. The maid opened it, and a shrill voice penetrated the room:

"Them dimn rabbits that you give my Timothy, sure'n they eat up ivery bit of my lettuce an' my young cabbage plants from the hotbed—afther all my care'n and workin'! Be jiggers, if I lay my hand on that young scamp, I'll shake the liver outen 'im!"

"Tell Mary I'll settle with her the next time she comes to wash," came a voice from regions unknown.

The door-bell rang a long, impatient, angry peal. John answered it.

"Say!" came an irate male voice. "That young scoundrel of yours inveigled a dollar and a half out of me for a weekly paper. I don't believe he had any authority to do so. I'm going to have him up before the juvenile authorities for this. I thought it was an established magazine, and here I hear that he was taking these subscriptions for a magazine he was going to print. If you don't do something, I——"

"Now, Mr. Morris, you're a bit excited. The boy did try to print a paper. Naturally, I didn't know he was collecting money in advance. He shouldn't have done that. Alice! Know anything about this? Mr. Morris is here, and says Junior collected one dollar and a half in advance——"

"Tell him," she called out, "I'll settle with him and any one else who has paid money for subscriptions or advertising."

Just then, the telephone-bell rang. Junior answered. Presently, he called:

"Mother! It's Mrs. Hershey of the Mothers' Help Club. She wants to ask you somethin' 'bout her Tommy's radio. She wants to know what to do if——"

"Tell her I'm sick or out of town—anything!" came the snappy answer from a remote corner of the house.

THINGS had quieted somewhat in the Oliver household. John and Junior had turned silently to their dinners. Junior kept his eyes on his plate while the father centered his gaze on Junior. Presently Alice appeared on the scene. She went straight to the point.

"John, junior," she began dramatically, pointing her finger at the young lad, "the maid tells me there was not an apple in the house when she went to make her pies this morning. I just bought a peck yesterday. She also says that she baked a three-gallon crock full of cookies yesterday morning and there's not a one left. I put away enough pudding for dinner this evening. It's all gone. Now, *this is the law:* You're not to touch a thing in this house without permission. Not a thing! Understand? And, furthermore—when you get through high school, *you're going to study law!* That's settled!"

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"THE story is strong and absorbing — its people are living and endearing"

The *Public Square*

Pidge, After a Momentous Step, Wakes to Some Bitter Realities, and Dicky, with Pidge Still Alive in His Heart, Finds in India Something That Is Not Happiness but Is Better Than Anything He Has Ever Known

By Will Levington Comfort

Illustrations by C. R. Chickering

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story is here up to this issue.

WHEN Pandora Musser, whom everybody called "Pidge," left her home near Santa Monica, California, to woo fortune in New York, she brought with her an unfinished romantic novel of eighteenth-century France, "The Lance of the Rivernais." Her mental training had been a strange one, and she was trying to throw off everything that belonged to her life with her father, who had come under the influence of the esoteric East and wrote and lectured on cosmic consciousness and kindred subjects.

Adolph Musser had been satisfied to talk; Pidge repudiated all talk and was determined to do something—no words about it.

Pidge found lodging in Greenwich Village in the house of Miss Claes, a cultivated half-caste woman of shadowy skin and an altruistic bent which she kept as secret as possible.

Miss Claes was assisted in her work by a Hindu called Nagar, or Naidu, who had been a disciple of Gandhi in South Africa, and who wrote a story about his master which was liked very much by the *Public Square*, a New York weekly magazine, conducted by John Higgins with the assistance of Richard Cobden. Through the latter's acquaintance with Nagar, Pidge's manuscript, "The Lance," found its way into that publication's office, though Richard Cobden was not told that it was the work of Pidge.

The novel was returned. Dicky Cobden ripped the story wide open in criticism to Miss Claes, with Pidge listening. The latter managed still to keep the secret from Dicky, though they were much together. The girl was now at work pasting labels in a can factory, where her life touched that of Fanny Gallup, a street-girl who dinned in Pidge's ears for hours each day talk about boys and men.

Pidge, utterly weary from her work in the factory, was tempted to marry Dicky Cobden, who offered ease and wealth and an end of the familiar struggle in New York just to live. She resisted, putting

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Dicky from her at the last moment with the word that if she did take him, it would only be for what he had, not for what he was. After that, they were drifting apart in the usual way of people impossible for each other, when Miss Claes took them out to dinner at a Punjabi restaurant in the Village and talked mysteriously about love as a bigger thing than mere man-and-woman infatuation. Dicky was on the eve of leaving for Africa and was curiously appealed to.

After he was gone, Pidge found that, in spite of his hurt, Dicky had made a place for her on the *Public Square* as reader of unsolicited manuscripts. Deeply moved by the kindness of the man she had hurt so much, Pidge accepted the position, and her days as a factory-girl in New York were over.

While Dicky was away, Pidge met Rufus Melton, a young story-writer up against it in New York. Melton had none of Cobden's substantial character, but Pidge was attracted to him with a power that she had not felt from the other. Her father, always heretofore impecunious, sent her fifty dollars at this time, and Pidge loaned this money to Melton to pay his room-rent and return to Cleveland, where he could write and board for nothing at the house of his aunt. The day after, she discovered that Melton has fooled her and not left New York.

Later the same day she heard that her father was able to send her money because he had married a rich woman. This double revelation brought Pidge to the last ebb of shame and humiliation.

Dicky Cobden was called back from Africa to New York by the world-war. He had been unable and unwilling to forget Pidge. Still she held herself from him, however, and following out her idea of being straight, finally told Dicky of her meetings with Rufus Melton and of the latter taking her in his arms. Even if she never saw Melton again, she confessed, something in her continued to answer him, and she refused to lie to herself. This plunged Cobden into the depths.

Still, they went out together. They tried, furiously tried, but the star toward which they had held their eyes, the star named "*Camaraderie*," was for the present out of their sky.

One night, in her own particular time of revelations, when she lay on the borderland between sleeping and waking, she saw herself like an ogre and Dicky Cobden like a terrified child in a great house, and she was driving him from one room to another, from one floor to another, to an inevitable cornering in some last upper room.

A night in early October, and again his car had halted before the house in Harrow Street, but they had not opened the door to the curb.

"Pidge," he said suddenly, "I've got to the end of my rope. I am not making good. I get blurred on what we are about. I keep remembering the letter of our agreement, but somehow I fog the spirit of it. I don't want France or Flanders. I'm going into Turkey and the Near East for the *Public Square* and a newspaper syndicate."

"I knew it," she said, after a second or two. "I knew you were going away. But, oh, Dicky, I know there's some meaning back of the puzzle of it all—some humor, if we can only live to find it."

PIDGE MUSSER was ending her second year in the editorial rooms of the *Public Square* when a short story came in from Rufus Melton. Meanwhile, his work had begun to appear in magazines of large popular appeal. This manuscript, called "The Boarded Door," had doubtless not fitted into any of them. The chief thing about the story to Pidge was that her cheeks burned as she read.

This made her angry. Another thing: the story was so familiar to her. She seemed to be in and out of Melton's mind, hearing his typewriter, understanding even his corrections.

But also she saw what the author could not—his fluctuations of fancy which uncentered the tale.

"He's beginning to be read," said John Higgins. "It's not a bad story. We'd better take it."

"It is not his best work, not because it comes to us with refusals on it but because there's a cavity in it," said Pidge. "If it were by a new name altogether, we'd write the author that we might be persuaded to make him an offer if he would work over the weak part."

"Do it," said John Higgins. "Go ahead

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"Have you got any—anything to eat?" "That's why I sent the letter. That's why they keep squallin' all the time."

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and scuttle the ship, young woman. We don't care about pleasing our passengers."

Pidge was smitten with the idea that she hadn't been fair. In the course of reading Melton's story she had not once forgotten that he had failed to pay back that fifty dollars. She had to write the letter to Melton three times. Films of ice formed on the sentences and had to be skimmed off in spite of her most rigid effort. She carried the sheet signed by "The Editors" to John Higgins with a restless feeling that damage was done.

"That's just like what Dicky Cobden would say," he remarked, handing it back. "Send it along with the manuscript."

Pidge wasn't allowed to forget Dicky Cobden, though Richard himself was across the world and remained across, apparently groping to find the exact antipodes to Washington Square, New York. Between Miss Claes's affection for him and John Higgins' and Nagar's, considering her occasional use of his "parlor" in Harrow Street and her daily use of his old desk in the office, to say nothing of the position she occupied through his kindness and care—no; she wasn't being allowed to forget.

That night Pidge left the office early to answer a call from Fanny Gallup, whom she had seen several times the first year after leaving the factory, but not once during the second. She had asked Fanny to write or telephone in case of need, and yesterday had come a dingy bit of white paper to Harrow Street, like something you would see in the street round a school-building. Pidge was awed at the unfailing magic of the post-office authorities, that it had ever been delivered. She found the room in the third floor of a condemned building in Foley Street, and was directed to a door, through which came the sounds of a crying child.

A woman answered her knock, and the caller gradually realized from the shadows that she was being grinned at. Pidge smiled back, wondering if the shoeless creature were Fanny's mother. She wore no outer waist and a heavy plaid skirt that was splashed with wash-water. An infant shrank into the hollow curve of her body, and another child sat wailing on the wet floor behind.

'I thought you'd come, Musser."

It was Fanny herself. Pidge had crossed the threshold to look into eyes in which hate and hunger moved in a narrow orbit—narrow, like the wet spot on the floor in which the first-born played. Tired back, draggled hair, merely a stretched and faded vestige of a girl was Fanny Gallup now. Laugh and street-talk were gone for the time, at least—gone as Albert, the barber, as much a myth as ever, so far as Pidge was concerned, though the place hypothecated a male parent.

"No; it ain't no good to think of stayin', Musser, because they're tearin' the buildin' down."

"How much rent do you owe?"

"Five weeks. But it ain't no good to pay that, because I got to get out, anyway. Gawd, Redhead, you look like a doll in a window!"

"How soon do you have to leave here?"

"Four days. That's why I sent the letter."

"Have you got any—anything to eat?"

"That's why I sent the letter. That's why they keep squallin' all the time."

"I'll be back before dark," Pidge said, turning into the hall.

"You'll—sure—come—back?"

"Sure!" called Pidge.

She returned with her arms full of groceries, and went home promising to come back the next afternoon.

"BRING them here. There is no other way," Miss Claes said.

"But they're not clean!" Pidge moaned. "They are too sick to keep clean."

"We can freshen them up a little," said Miss Claes.

"But there's nothing Fanny can do unless the two children are taken from her. I mean, she's held to the room with them now, and they've been crying so long that they can't stop. They both cry at once, and she doesn't hear them; they look and listen for a second and then go on crying. If one stops, he hears the other. The place smelled like a sty, and the packages of food I brought got wet and spoiled before they were opened."

"Forget about them until to-morrow, Pidge, and then get a taxi-cab and bring them here. I've got a second-floor room toward the back."

Then Miss Claes told Pidge that Nagar had left her this morning, that he was on his

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way back to India to join Gandhi, whose work was finished in South Africa.

Pidge searched the dark eyes in the silence. She found no blur in their deep serenity.

"And you—" she said at last.

"I—I shall have to have a servant now."

Fanny Gallup was taking life easy. She had not been separated from her children but relieved, for the present, from the hunger-drive to support them. Pidge helped to pay Fanny's room and board, but didn't miss the fact that the main expense fell on Miss Claes.

"There is a little fund back of me for just such cases, Pidge," Miss Claes said. "There is no reason in the world why you should be inconvenienced."

"Except that I brought her here ——"

"I asked you to."

"I'll have to pay what I can, if only because I hate to so. Fanny pulls out the very devil from me. But I can never pay for bringing her to your house."

Miss Claes laughed.

"Fanny isn't heavy on us here. She's only a little more simple than most, a little less secretive."

"She's unmoral," Pidge declared solemnly. "The awful thing is she doesn't learn. Life passes through like a sieve, leaves its muck on her, and she doesn't learn."

Another trouble was that Fanny was beginning to show fresh traces of her sense of the "fun of the thing." Her spine was stiffening a little with good food and rest, and curious little suggestions of starch showed in lips and hair and breast that had been utterly draggled. She was often seen hanging over the banisters when any one moved below, sure indication of renewal of life and hope. She didn't weep over the departed Albert; in fact, Pidge Musser observed, as an added revelation of the hatefulness of life, that Fanny was back on the scene looking for a man—not earnestly, not passionately, but without compunction and entirely unwhipped. Fanny granted that she was nobody, that she never had been; but that was no sign why she should pass up anything that was going by. Pain and hunger were forgotten like a sickness.

One night, as she was coming in, Pidge heard Fanny's low laugh on the floor above and she ran up-stairs in time to shoo a lodger from Fanny's arms in the doorway.

Then she followed into the littered room and a light was made. The two women faced. The laugh remained unwithered on Fanny's cheerful face.

"Oh, Musser, you look so cross!" she panted.

"Don't you remember—" Pidge began.

"Remember wot?"

"What you were in that beast's nest in Foley Street?"

"That's what you always want, Musser—always want me to keep rememberin' just as I'm gettin' straightened out."

The fashion of Fanny's straightening-out settled upon Pidge as she looked round the room. Its awfulness was beyond tears to her, even beyond laughter.

"Fanny Gallup, if you bring another baby here, I'll—I'll——".

"There ain't goin' to be no other baby here, Musser. I ain't nobody's chicken like that."

RUFUS MELTON did not deign to answer that letter from "The Editors." One day, just as Pidge was finishing luncheon with John Higgins, she turned to hear Melton's voice. He moved round the table with a fling of his coat tails and held out both his hands. It actually sounded, though she never was sure, as if he said something like, "I've been looking everywhere for you."

Pidge fancied a sort of rueful wonder on the old editor's face as he announced his haste to get back to the office and bolted out.

Melton's face was slightly broader, she thought, and the poise of young success was upon it. One thing she had never known before was how remarkably well his curly head was placed upon its shoulders. The neck was not merely a nexus but a thing of worth in itself, with arch and movement which made him look taller and intimated something light and fleet, touching memories which Pidge could not quite grip.

They were together in the street. Melton seemed on both sides of her at once, his hand drawing her deftly this way and that through the crowd, his chat and laughter

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in her ears and an old, indescribable weariness and helplessness in herself.

"Sure I could have hunted you up! In fact, I would have done it eventually, but I haven't been in New York all the time, running back West to get my stuff up now and then."

"I thought you lived in New York," Pidge said.

"I keep an apartment in Twenty-fourth Street," he granted. A lull for just an instant before he went on, "You see, it's handy to my publishers, and my bank is only a block or two away."

Pidge wished she could accept him for just what he seemed—the upstart American in literature. She wished to forget everything else save the youth who said, in effect, "This is my bank; this is my solicitor; this is my publisher." But she could not smile her scorn and pass on. She felt like the parent of a child showing off. Back of the tinkle and flush of these big days of his, which he seemed to be drinking in so breathlessly, she felt more than ever that thing about him which was imprisoned, to which she had some ancient relation which called to her, as if she were the only one in the world who understood, and kept calling beseechingly.

"I'll never forget," he said, speaking of the fifty dollars. "I'll never forget that night when I left you—and the fog in the park. Everything was different after that."

"You didn't go to Cleveland that night, as you said," she declared, watching the curve of his black lashes.

The eyes darted her way.

"Lucky I didn't," he said. "God! How I wanted to! New York had me bluffed that night—before you came to the rescue."

"Why didn't you go?"

"I was up close to Grand Central with my bag when the idea struck me—the idea that has since come out in the story-series that has caught on. I could hardly realize that I had your money. I kept it in my hand—the hand in my pocket. That was a turning-point in a life. New York had frightened me pretty nearly to death—the hunger thing, you know. All I wanted on earth was to crawl into that train for Cleveland, but it was as if you were calling on me to stay."

She turned in pain and amazement. He was looking straight ahead and talking softly. She saw every twist and drive of his mind as he dramatized the situation unfolding to him. He was deeply absorbed in the pictures which his fertile brain uncovered one by one. It hurt her like the uncovering of something perverted in herself.

"Don't go on like that," she said. "You're not working now. You are just walking in the street. You mustn't make stories when you talk." He glanced at her sorrowfully, as one realizing in himself a truth so big that he is willing to wait for it to be believed. "And you could forget me—forget the fifty dollars for nearly a year!" She laughed.

"I could never forget you," he repeated.

She laughed again.

"Why, I don't believe you even remembered my name. Do you think no one sees?"

"I don't blame you for talking that way. I expect to be misunderstood—not me, but the thing I stand for."

SHE was hushed. Could he mean that he suffered in conscious conflict? Could it be that he was aware at all of that imprisoned thing she saw back of his eyes? He had halted, and now she turned again for him to go on.

"I hoped that you—you, of all—might understand," he said. "Why, it was from you that the whole thing started." He seemed actually to be making himself believe it. She felt herself trying to give him the benefit of the doubt. "Do you know you're changed?" he said, in sudden exultation. "Do you know you're five times as charming? What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened," said Pidge.

"It was the strangest shock in the restaurant when I saw you. I knew it was you, and yet you've put on something—out of the ordinary."

"Oh, don't— I must go back to the office now."

"The bank is just half a block. We've been walking in circles. I hadn't a check in my pocket. I wanted to walk with you, anyway. Do you really have to get back to the office?"

"Oh, yes."

"Couldn't you—couldn't we go down to the river or to a show somewhere? I know what you're thinking—that if this meant

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so much to me, how could I let it go for nearly a year? But you'll understand. You'll see what I mean and what I'm up against. The thing was too big for me to rush in. I had to wait. But now that you've come, I can't let you go."

"I must go back."

"To-night, then. Couldn't I meet you at the *Public Square* at five and have supper?"

"Oh, no. I must go home first."

"May I call for you at Harrow Street, say at seven, or before that? Say—couldn't we go to that old restaurant where we went that night?"

This idea had come to Pidge before he spoke—exactly, perhaps as it caught his fancy.

"Yes, I could." Pidge cleared her voice and spoke again above the roar of the street. "Yes, I could." Then, because she had lifted her voice, she seemed to hear her own tones unforgetably. "But I must hurry back now," she added.

"Let's get this bank thing finished."

But when they reached the door of the bank, they found it closed for the rest of the day.

JOHN HIGGINS was like a somber relative of the elder generation that afternoon—one you had to consider, could not insult or hope to make understand.

Had Melton known that the bank would be closed? She would soon learn about that, for he had promised to bring the check to-night. Even if he didn't, she could never forget that calling to her back of his actor-eyes—calling like a child of her own. New York whirled by below; the manuscripts were piled high at front and side. A last Mecca letter came in from Richard Cobden, now on his way to India. Even that did not rouse John Higgins or startle Pidge Musser from the painful web she was in.

Melton was at the basement entrance at seven. As Pidge went down to meet him, Fanny Gallup was coming up. They met in the second hall. Fanny stood in the gaslight, her arms open wide, her dress open at the breast, her eyes laughing.

"I saw him, Redhead. He's a God-awful, that boy! Don't you bring no little baby to this house. I won't stand for it."

Melton wore a black cape coat, a dinner coat beneath. Pidge felt as if she had left all her light in the second hall. She was exasperated with herself for pushing past Fanny and not taking the joke gracefully, exasperated with Melton for togging up to come to Harrow Street to take her to that old eating-house. Couldn't he resist showing off for just one hour?

Some awe seemed to have fallen upon him, or, rather, between them. In silence they rounded the almost empty curve of Harrow Street and presently entered the crowds and lights and crashes of trestled Sixth Avenue. On the corner, as they crossed Eighth Street, Pidge heard a newsboy behind say, "There goes a movie actor." Pidge knew too well what that grimed child-face had seen.

It troubled Melton to find the restaurant, and she didn't help, though she had located it a score of times since that other night.

At the table, while they waited, he took a fifty-dollar check from his pocket and handed it over, saying that the real part of the favor he would try to pay bit by bit through the years.

"Because I'll never get very far from you again," he added queerly. "You find it very funny, don't you? Sit there chuckling, don't you? You can laugh, but it's true."

Now Melton began to ask for things which weren't in the house. He told the waitress how things should be prepared and served—this in a side-street "eating-house" that specialized in beans and encouraged counter trade. There were hard lines round the mouth of the waitress which Melton commented upon as she turned her back. Pidge had a warning to hold her temper, and yet she would have died first.

"I've never worked in a restaurant," she said, "but I've worked in a factory, and I know what those lines come from. They come from dealing with people like you, people who forget where they are, forget what they came for."

A trace of sullenness showed in his eyes, and then a warmth of almost incredible delight.

"It's great! I never was scolded in my life."

"It wasn't for supper alone—that wasn't why I fell into the idea of coming here," she said. "You forget it entirely. You dare to come in a dress suit—here—here!"

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"Listen!" he begged. "Don't run away with that idea. I thought we might go to a theatre afterward. I didn't think so much about where we were going as I did that I was coming to you. I didn't have anything better than this to put on, and so I came this way."

A moment before it had seemed the most righteous and perfect thing under heaven to vent a few scathing remarks, but now she felt twisted and diminished. Long and religiously she had tried to keep her rages to herself. They were silent while the plates were being served, and then he said:

"I was horribly out of true in telling these people how to do it. But I wanted it good for you," he added simply.

She looked into him, but the intensity of her trying that instant kept her from reading what was really back of his eyes.

They were in the streets.

"No; I don't want to go up-town," said Pidge. "I don't feel like the theatre to-night."

"Wouldn't you like a ride in the harbor? The ferries are empty this time of night."

"No; we'll cross over to Harrow Street."

"May I come in? There's so much to say. It's just—finding you again—Pan."

"Not to-night. I want to be alone."

He didn't answer. She felt a little better after that. She had thought it might be harder to have her way. There seemed always something he could not say behind his words. It wasn't all lies. It became clear for a moment that he would follow after her—so long as she could run ahead, that he would only turn away and forget when she paused to breathe or play.

"I feel strange," he said, in the silence of Harrow Street. "It's strange to-night. It's like finding the house one has been looking for so long—the house, even the door, but not the key. Pan," he said suddenly, "give it to me. Give me the key. It's you—it's yours——"

His strength was without strain—the strength that is effortless, the strength of laughter. He had taken her to him suddenly, and she dwelt in it, though resisting—something ecstatic, even in holding out. She heard voices in herself, and faces flashed through her mind—Cobden's, Fanny Gallup's—but her arms and shoulders and breast knew a terrible sweetness from his strength. It wasn't hateful. It was like her own boy, not a stranger. His laughing face was nearer. It was coming to hers. In the dark she could see it—eyes and eyelids, curving nostrils and laughing lips. She knew something would die in her when it touched—that she was dying now of the slowness of its coming. She ceased to struggle, and all that she had known and been rose within her to meet his lips.

She was on the second flight of stairs. She almost prayed that Fanny's door would not open. She wanted to be in her own little room, the smaller the better to-night—no touch or voice upon her. The key turned in her trembling hand. She was safe; the door locked again. She stood in the dark.

WHEN Dicky essayed the thing Miss Claes spoke of at the Punjabi dinner, he started something which he meant to live to. That it was harder than he dreamed—an effort, in fact, involving dreary years—hadn't broken his resolution so far. Not to cast Pidge out of mind, not to hate.

There were really extraordinary days of service in Arabia with young Tom Lawrence, whose fame Dicky Cobden helped to make—desert days of camel-back and Turk-fighting; desert nights of smoke and tea in such starry stillnesses that one almost expected the Christ to appear; then, after many weeks, mail at Mecca, and one letter from John Higgins, which was read several times.

You have done several good things for the *Public Square*, including your last story on young Lawrence, which is making a noise like starting something; but you never did a better thing than wishing this Musser chi on our editorial rooms. She's a whole party, Dicky. She's brand-new every morning. She's honest, and a worker. She has brains and a whole lot of psychic viscera, sometimes designated as "soul." . . . Also, Miss Musser is a stenographer. Never whispered it until one morning when Maneatin' Dolly was ill with the flu. My letters were piled up. "Give them to me," she said. I did that thing, and I've been dictating my editorials ever since. It's like talking to an intelligent audience. And still we stay out of the war. They're sending over one big imperialist after another from London, trying to get us in, but so far— . . . Give us more of the inky desert nights, young man. So long!

Dicky reached Bombay from Aden in the spring of 1917.

He was now on his way home, the long way round. He had told no one, but it had

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grown upon him of late that he could relish a bit of New York after almost two and a half years. He coldly ignored in himself the tendency to thrill at the thought of seeing Pidge Musser again. In fact, he believed he had drilled himself rather severely not to permit hopes of any kind to occupy his mind.

He had made a bit of a name for himself as a reporter, but was known more as a first-class fact-getter than a feature-writer among newspaper men. This was peculiar in a man who hoped to do fiction one day.

The word that went with him in the cult was "reliability."

To be cool was said to be Cobden's religion. The stuff that he wrote was cool, and the words that he said. "I am a reporter only," he occasionally explained. "I write what I see, not my own reactions or opinions." He had written a lot of big newspaper stories, but in his heart of hearts everything was a side issue—world-politics, world-wars, newspaper stories, magazine stories, even the Big Story of it all—compared to the war in himself over a girl named Pidge. He still had night-sweats over the name of Rufus Melton. A quiet voice, a tired smile, a face darkened and dusty-looking from exposure, even after a clean shave—out of this face, usually shadowed by a big cake-basket helmet of cork, shone a pair of steady eyes in a fine mesh of dusty brown wrinkles—Dicky at twenty-eight.

He had hardly stepped ashore at Bombay when he heard that the States had entered the war. He touched the sleeve of an Englishman who was looking up at the promenade deck of the ship with eyes and mouth wide open.

"Tell me—I hadn't heard," he said hoarsely.

"She's in; but I must say, sir, she took a long time about it."

"But that cannot be," Dicky answered.

Now the Englishman stared, that being the peerless rebuke. Morever, he observed that the American had a curiously withered look, and presumed that he was a mere upstart person. Accordingly, the Englishman refixed his triple focus on the ship's promenade deck, and Cobden tunneled into the 'bus for the King George. There he verified the news. He went to his room a bit whipped, quite a little bit whipped. He wanted to be alone.

Now he realized that, consciously or not, every line he had written for over two years had a pressure from his heart against America entering the war. He had written and felt for the States as only an exile can.

Something snapped when he had been alone in his room for four hours. The snap was Dicky's romantic allegiance to the country of his school-histories. For the present he was a man without national gravity, and a sick man, since some hot, hard-held part of himself had been ripped out.

The following ship brought his mail, including a letter from Pidge Musser, which he opened with an old and ugly fear, and in this letter the worst that he had ever feared fell upon him. It read in part:

> There is no other way. I have tried to dodge it. but it has to be told, and told now, that I have taken Rufus Melton. . . .I am not trying to fool myself with the thought that this doesn't carry another hurt to you, and I'm so sorry, sorry. . . .
>
> Can you ever understand that I did not do this for happiness, that I have been drilled from a tiny girl not to expect happiness in this life, that the best moments I have ever known have come from my work with John Higgins and my friendship with you, that, though I am terribly drawn to him, there has never been a moment, nor can be, with him that is unmixed with pain. . . . About what I have done, there were not two ways for me. It was inevitable. He brings a mirror to me, and says, "Look!" I want to scream, because the mirror brings out all my defects. That's what his presence means. . . . This is one true thing: the one who can rouse the most hell in your breast is the one to whom you belong for the time. . . . Have I not been glad for your stability? Only a woman could know! And have I not been proud for your moving so quietly up and down the East, keeping your surfaces clean for the world-events to be pictured there without twist or falsehood?
>
> A strange door was opened in my being when I was a child. In and out that door, whether I will or not, you have often come and gone. "He is my friend," I whisper, "my friend"—and repeat it a thousand times.

HE HAD read it through to the end. Line by line the thing was killing him. He got up and crossed the heavy red carpet to the hall door and turned the key in the lock. He was afraid some one would come in and find him. He had the strange power of partly seeing himself as the sullen horrors of hatred and revolt boiled up in his breast. Vaguely, but quite well enough, he could watch the man called Richard Cobden in

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the dim hotel room, the shoulders hunched, the mouth stretched and crooked, unable to sit still, the face wet with poisonous sweat.

The love had gone out of him and, with it, all the light he had. He thought he had known pain and loneliness since leaving New York, but all he had known was humming content, because there had been a laughing idolatry for all her ways and words, a reliance upon her that he had dared to call absolute. "Understand, understand!" she had cried all through the letter. Oh, yes; he could understand. She wasn't what he had made her out to be—that was clear enough. He had built upon something which wasn't there. He had called her—built into himself the conviction—that she was the honestest thing alive, and here she was lying to herself all through this letter. She had raised her house upon a boundary, and she was neither Jew nor Greek. Why hadn't she been able to say, "Rufus Melton pulled me so that I couldn't resist, and I fell for him"?

His thought shot back to the night of the Punjabi dinner. That little basement room was devastated before his mind, the table overturned, the face of Miss Claes a mockery, the face of Pidge Musser that of an American girl found out. Into the center of his consciousness was now flung his old promise not to hate.

He heard his own laughter. He saw the stretched and twisted mouth from which it came. Like a couple of sly schoolgirls, they looked at him now—Pidge and Miss Claes—slyly pulling together and duping a fat boy.

He saw his room-key upon the table. Number Five, it was, the fifth floor. He looked round the dim-papered wall—whitish red, like the pulp of raspberries—the deep-upholstered chairs, the seats slightly crushed, the full-length mirror, the ash-tray, the silver flask on the writing-table, his own things here and there orderly enough—all but himself, a sort of maniacal Mr. Hyde.

"Number Five—queer little old musty room. I wonder who died here," he muttered. "Good-night, Pidge; good-night, dear America—grand pair to tie to!"

The next day he cabled to his newspaper connection that he was not returning to France, for the opening campaign, at least, and wrote to John Higgins that he didn't expect to send in much stuff for the present. I expect to stay a while in India—just looking around. She smells like a typhoid ward, and needs orderlies. I'll, of course, let you know what comes of my *spectating*.

He remained in Number Five through the days and walked the streets of Bombay at night, walked like a man in a strait-jacket. He wasn't conscious of this at first, until he began to feel an ache from the tension of his neck and shoulder-muscles and tightened elbows. When he forced himself to relax, however, the torture of his thoughts was accentuated. He had been holding himself rigidly to help fend off the destroying rush of mental images. He walked himself into one sweat after another, for the nights were hot and humid. The point of all his fighting was to keep Pidge Musser out of mind. Of course he could not succeed. She came in by every door. She came in softly; she came in scornfully; she came in singing, scolding. Mostly she came in saying, "Why, don't you see, Dicky, I am nearer and clearer than ever?" Then it was as if an isolated bit of shrapnel had exploded in his brain.

THE breaking-down of all this old stuff broke much of his body with it in two weeks of Bombay; but Dicky had a good body, and his physical vitality began to steal back. The love was gone, but out of the débris of Subramini's Punjabi Fireplace the face of Miss Claes came up faintly smiling again. She seemed actually to have foreseen that night something—even as far as this. He had failed. He might keep up the battle against hatred, but to hold the love was too big a job for him.

Then a letter came from Miss Claes herself, part of which he read in dismal irony, and part with an awakening of interest, if not actual lure, for the letter told him that Nagar also was in India, in Ahmadabad, and would be glad to see and help him in any way. In a fit of intolerable pain he destroyed the letter, though it said many extraordinary things about Pidge and himself.

It was all very pretty and consistent; it sounded good, but it was no longer his sort of project. It wasn't for the product of three generations of hardware merchants and manufacturers. Funny, he thought, how he had ever accepted visionary stuff like that! He would write Miss Claes sometime how he had failed, but not now. On

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the night train for Ahmadabad two weeks later, he felt India closing about him really for the first time. Once, when the train stopped, he smelled the altogether indescribable earthiness of hills that had been sun-baked all day, now letting it be known through the moistness of the night. It was vaguely like home to him—not home in America, but home on earth again, the faintest symptom of his reallegiance to life here, only known to one coming up out of sickness. In the early morning he lay for a while after wakening in a sort of bodily peace. It was as if he had really rested a little, as if he had left behind some utterly miserable part of himself in the red room at Bombay.

"A bit questionable," he muttered whimsically, with the trace of a smile, "a bit shabby and questionable to leave a bundle, a black bundle like that, in Number Five—for some one else to stumble over."

He fell asleep again and reawoke with a curious sentence on his lips, something that he had forgotten a long time, something that Miss Claes had said: "Nobody knows Nagar—nobody."

"Nobody ever will," he added, "if he doesn't talk any more than he used to."

Again at breakfast the faintest little quiver of organic ease stole into him. The earth was very bright outside, and the pot of tea that had been brought tasted actually sane. He had the feeling of being on the way somewhere, of having escaped something, as he watched India slip by from the window of his compartment. Then Ahmadabad, the station, a Hindu in white garments almost taking him in his arms—laughing, talking like an American—Nagar talking!

IT WAS as Pidge had felt from the beginning. Whenever she and Rufus Melton came together, unfinished business appeared on the table between them. One Sunday morning, about three weeks after the luncheon in which she had met Rufus Melton again, Pidge found Miss Claes alone in her basement room.

"He wants to come here," she said, speaking of Melton.

"Why not?" said Miss Claes.

Pidge looked for several seconds steadily into her friend's face. Miss Claes turned her back for a moment to bring a chair to the fire; then she turned to bring another, placing them close together.

"Can't you believe, Pidge," she said at last, "that I understand?"

"It's so hard for me to understand that I hardly hoped any one else would. I'm like two persons in one, and each is fighting the other. I've wanted you so very much to understand. I know how fond you are of Dicky."

"But I do not have to distrust you because I am fond of Richard Cobden," Miss Claes said.

Pidge breathed deeply, staring into the fire.

"We were married night before last. We want to come here to live. We will each go on with our work for the time."

Miss Claes glanced at her wistfully a moment. Pidge Musser's face had never been so lovely to her. It was like land that has had its rains after long waiting—soft blooms starting, an earthy sweetness rising in the washed sunlight. The beginnings of both laughter and tears were in Pidge's eyes; her red-brown hair had an easy, restful gleam in its coils.

"Why, Pidge," Miss Claes said at last, "you are like one who has been born again! I catch the scent about you of the south wind after the rain. It is wonderful! I had almost forgotten."

"But I didn't do it for happiness!" Pidge was sobbing. "Not for an instant am I allowed to forget that he brings a terrible task to me when he comes into the room. The joy of finding, of having—I am not allowed to have it for a second! Oh, don't you see what I mean? We are not allowed to shut the world out."

"Of course I see."

"Tell me, Miss Claes; why we can't shut the door and just live? Why can't there be a kingdom for two? Why should I find this passion, and at the same time know it is not what I want? Oh, tell me why I had to do this and not have some glamour or illusion to work with?"

The form was soft and gliding in Miss Claes's arms. The square-shouldered little figure of the factory- and office-girl had become almost eloquent with its emotional power. After a moment Pidge straightened, her face staring into Miss Claes's.

"I couldn't run away. I wanted him," she repeated. "No use lying about it. I

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fell for him; but there's another side. There's something in him that I seem to have known from the beginning—something like a little child that I left somewhere ages ago. It keeps calling to me from his eyes. It leaves everything to go to him—everything that Dicky means and the world, even writing books—I leave all that to go to him. And yet when I go, when I go to his arms, I lose the purpose. It's as if the child that I run to—the irresistible thing that calls to me from his eyes—stops crying and stops needing me. Then I suddenly know that it must need me and not be gratified, ever to be helped. Oh, no one on earth could understand that. It's insane."

"But, Pidge, I do understand."

"How can you?"

"Because I have loved like that. Because I have had experience. I loved an English boy in the same way—oh, long ago. I love him still, but I could not stay with him, because he—why, Pidge, it is just the same. He needs to cry for some one, for something; otherwise he remains asleep in life. When I went to him, he was satisfied and looked elsewhere. I almost died of revolt."

Pidge's eyes were very wide and awed.

"And when you didn't go to him?" she said in slow tones. "What happened then?'

"It was then that he remembered and reminded me that I was half-caste. Also, he looked elsewhere, just the same."

"And you still love him?"

"Deep underneath—that is not changed."

"But why—tell me again—why can't I have Rufe—and forget everything?"

"Because, I believe, like me, you are called to learn the next step, the next lesson in what love means. You want the love that has two ends, but the Triangle is ready for you. Oh, many are learning the mystery of the Triangle. It hurts so at first, but it lets the world in—the bigger meanings of life."

Pidge shuddered again.

"Is it blasphemy," she asked, "that I feel just as close to Dicky Cobden—as ever?"

"No more than the finding of bread would spoil your taste for water."

Pidge said at last:

"Oh, I don't want to leave this house, Miss Claes. He wants to come here, too."

"I've been thinking of putting a bathroom on the third floor. There is a tiny empty room like yours across the hall. The bath shall be installed there. Now, I have kept Nagar's room empty. It is pleasant and larger than yours. I shall have a door cut through the partition, and, with a bath opposite, you will do well enough for a time."

"You would give us Nagar's room?"

"Nagar has the key to the whole house," said Miss Claes.

Moments afterward, Pidge's strong fingers closed over the hands of the other.

"No one can know how it hurts—to think of Dicky——"

"He is with Nagar now."

"Do you think—can it be possible that Nagar will help him—as you help me?"

"Nagar and the Little Man," said Miss Claes.

THEY were ensconced in the two upper rooms. Pidge kept up her work at the *Public Square* and did not come home for luncheon. She had told John Higgins of her marriage, but the subject was not mentioned afterward. The old chief vanished for three days following the news, and when he came back there was a new dignity on his part for Pidge to cope with. She found her position a trifle uncentered. His old stenographer took his letters, and he wrote his editorials on his own machine as aforetime. John Higgins said little, but found flaws in her judgments that had not appeared before. He no longer risked availing himself of her entire equipment—this change being apparently on the basis that he dare not get used to it all over again. He seemed to hold the idea that it was only a question of days at most before a married woman would forget place and town entirely, and rush off to pick up pieces of wool and thread for a nest.

Pidge had built so much of herself into her work that there was emphatic pain in the new conditions. She needed the work more than ever now, but the *Public Square* was falling into sorry days and ways. There was nothing to say but war, and if you didn't like war, didn't see the divine uses of war and say so, you had better say nothing. There was no field in the world at this time for a magazine of dignified—or any other kind—of protest, and in the steady

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loss of money week after week, the struggle became one of great simplicity—to stay alive.

"Higgins is a rotten old knocker, anyway," said Rufus Melton. "This is a time for Americans to stand together and not criticize the government. He never did pay any real money for his stuff, but was always ready to tell you where you fell down. They're telling him a word or two now."

So Pidge didn't speak much of the *Public Square* at home.

Rufus vibrated between a depression when his stuff wouldn't come through and an exaltation when it did. He was quite sincere in his industry, but slept late in the morning. Pidge was up and away four mornings out of five without waking him. Sometimes Rufe decided to eat his "big meal of the day" in the middle of the afternoon, in which case Pidge supped alone. He was slow to get his work started, so that it was often evening before he got "all of himself working at once." Then he was apt to stay with it for several hours, in which case Pidge could sleep if she got a chance. Occasionally he found that he could dictate a bit of first draft, and Pidge undertook at first to help him in this way, but when she perceived that it didn't occur to him, in the flush of his evening powers, that she had worked all day and must work to-morrow, she decided to stay off his night work.

"I can't, Rufe," she said one night on the way to bed. "It's so fascinating to practise napping in the hushes and rushes of your machine."

"You won't take this stuff?"

"No."

"You won't?"

"No. It will interfere with your work-session if you lose your temper. Of course, we've got the whole upper floor to start something in, but we must think of your story."

"Whose work counts in this outfit?" he demanded.

"Yours, Rufe, by all means. A fine, patriotic short story at any price. But I have a job to look after, and I can't give them a red-headed somnambulist to-morrow. No; I'm going to sleep. But I do hope you get the American flags waving all right in your story."

"I'll get you, Pan—for acting like this."

"You've got me, dear, and don't forget to have the hero come through with 'My country right or wrong—' No girl can resist that—or editor. Good-night."

Rufe was rarely rough. He didn't overtire or overstimulate himself, so that his temper could easily break corral; and at its worst this temper wasn't a man-eater. Rufe's nervous system was cushioned in a fine layer of healthy fat, and therefore didn't flog itself to madness against bare bone and sinew. He was merely involved in himself, which makes any man naive.

PIDGE wasn't missing any of the petty dramas of her present experience. When she came home the first time to find that he had already had dinner, something flew out of her into space in a frantic search for God. When she realized that he saw nothing but undisturbed equity in the idea of using her for his own work-purposes half the night, when she was contracted to the *Public Square* for the days, another output of herself was loose in the solar system. When she came to understand that the tens he was earning were mysteriously his own, and that her ones were theirs, another day, at least, was spoiled for her in the editorial rooms.

Rufe thought her extremely selfish. So had her father. "Two to one," she said. "They've got it on me. They've got it on all of us. This is their world." She thought of all this bitterness and bickering taking place in Nagar's room, which Miss Claes had saved for weeks for a sort of sanctuary of her own.

Sometimes Sundays or in unexpected periods of leisure they had moments of actual delight together. This occasionally happened when food just pleased him or when an acceptance from a magazine arrived at a price which he considered adequate. (Rufus never neglected the price of his things as an indication of his getting-on.) He uncovered a real levity at such times, and their talk didn't walk merely then; it danced. But once, in desperate fatigue, when there were moving dark spots before her eyes in every ray of daylight, Pridge cried to Miss Claes,

"But he is lost to everything, entirely oblivious to everything but himself and his work—his stories, his fame, his winning his way!"

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"I know, Pidge: but the world is on top of him yet. He is fighting his way up and out. Love cannot be entirely satisfying, you know, when it has Ambition for a rival. You have told me something about the thrall of a book in yourself—how engrossing it is."

"That all goes out of me when I'm with him," Pidge said suddenly. "I never thought of it before, but all that old agony to produce another book that I used to feel is gone. I seem to let him carry all that."

"That helps for the present, doesn't it?"

"Yes; and it isn't all sordid—don't think I mean that, Miss Claes. Sometimes, when he's satisfied with his story, so that he can forget it, we have such good times. He's such a play-boy, such a playmate. Some old, terrible longing comes over me when we are close like that to slam the door shut, to bolt and nail the world out, just to be like one of the Mediterranean women, who know nothing but to replenish the earth. But it doesn't do to dwell on that," Pidge finished, with an impressive quietness of tone. "One thing I learned rather well, before it was too late."

"What was that, Pidge?"

"That this isn't the time or place for us to bring a little baby into the world."

NAGAR was changed. On the day that Richard Cobden reached Ahmadabad, he encountered one of the surprises of his life. It was like meeting a man out in the freedom of the world whom one had only known before in prison. Nagar was not only free in the world, with the air of fearlessness that comes of established good fortune, but he was free in his own mind and speech, his days full of quiet laughter.

In America Nagar had looked dark; here he looked fair. There he had moved in and out as one of the colored men; here he was one of the elect. Of course, Dicky knew that the change was more substantial than that of garb or place. He could only repeat that Nagar seemed free in his own mind.

In the first few moments at the station in Ahmadabad, Dicky had himself felt unwashed and unworthy, as no man ever made him feel before. His hand went up to his chin. Yes; he had shaved that morning, but realizing it did not help much. It wasn't the grime of travel that hurt him but the smear of his recent mental and emotional overturning, the ugliness of all those days in the red room at Bombay, and the sense of failure and loss he lived with constantly since the coming of the letter from Pidge. Nagar seemed to look into him and to miss nothing of what he had been through; yet he became momentarily more friendly and companionable.

"And your friend Gandhi is actually here in Ahmadabad, and not a myth—the Little Man you wrote of in the South African story?" Dicky had asked, as they drew out of the crowd at the station.

"Not only that, but you are to go to the Ashrama now, if you will. He is eager to have you come."

"His house first?" Dicky asked.

"It is also the house in which I live," said Nagar.

"You mean that you wish to put me up in your quarters?"

"If you would not mind our great simplicity."

"Thanks! I would like that," said Dicky. "But I think it would be better for me to follow the usual course of a foreigner and find hotel quarters."

The Entresden was not crowded, and Dicky obtained comfortable quarters in a northeast room where the upholstering was covered in clean tan linen and the punkas showed signs of life immediately upon their entrance. Nagar prepared to leave as soon as Dicky sat down in the air-crossing between two shaded windows.

"Sit down, Nagar; don't hurry off."

"I thought you would prefer to rest until after tiffin."

"Stay and we'll have tiffin here. You'll pour the tea like the old days in Miss Claes's room," he forced himself to say.

Nagar's face was in the shadows, but there was a soft shining as of polished silver in or around his eyes.

"I've heard a lot about your saint in the past two or three weeks. What is Gandhi really getting at, Nagar?"

"He believes that politics cannot be successfully divorced from religion. His message always is toward the spiritualizing of India's political life and her institutions. He believes India must cease to imitate the West."

"But if she returns into herself, making her own goods, living up to her own laws,

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cutting herself off from all institutions of the present government, England will one day be done for here."

Nagar bowed without the trace of a smile.

"Every turn of a spinning-wheel in India takes a turn from a power-loom in Manchester," he said.

"And that isn't politics?" said Dicky. "I think I'll go in for religion myself."

At times, shutting his eyes as Nagar spoke, he could almost believe he was back in the basement at Harrow Street. The way Nagar said to him, "My friend," was almost Miss Claes herself. That was the poignant part of finding his friend again—that he brought back Harrow Street—even moments under the light. The day would have been joyous but for the hideous emptiness of his heart.

Dicky asked tirelessly about Gandhi, especially since it gave him such a chance to study the new Nagar.

"Mahatma-ji has burned away all waste," Nagar said at length. "He has narrowed himself down, body and mind, to an almost perfect obedience—self-control. He measures action to all his words. The best he knows, step by step he *performs*. Mahatma-ji has but one theme, one task. Everything but that in him he seems to have put to death. The more calmly you study him the more valuable will be the work which you do for us in America."

"Evidently it is easy for one to go off one's head where he is."

"Just that, Richard. His light is subtle and strong."

"I'll keep a stiff bridle-arm. Say, Nagar—as you spoke just now, I was thinking how I happened to be here to-day."

"Tell me, please."

"One hanging sock."

"I do not understand."

"One hanging sock. It was that which made me go out into the reception-room in the first place, that day you brought the story to the *Public Square*. I heard the office-boy say to J. H., 'He keeps pulling up his sock.' I went out to see. So that's what made me go to Harrow Street and meet Miss Claes and, and—others there, and go to Africa and come here. I believe that's what started the world-war."

Nagar laughed.

"I always had such trouble in the early days with American clothing. I would get one part working and another would give way."

"But, Nagar, what made it so imperative for you to have the two hundred that day?"

"A ship was leaving within twenty-four hours for the Mediterranean to connect with South African ports. Mahatma-ji was greatly in need of funds to carry on his work."

"One thing more: you weren't ill that day—what made you look so?"

"I was ill from strain—self-consciousness. It was one of the hardest things I ever had to do—to stand up against America."

"You certainly put it over. But what made you so silent in New York? It's an actual shock to find you chatty and human, like this."

"Certain of us in India are trained differently from American ways. We seek to silence all opinions, all half-truths, all thinking, in fact, in order to ***know***. We postulate, of course, a center of Spontaneous Knowledge, or Genius, above the mind. To learn obedience to this, one takes a vow of silence——"

"Ah, I remember, Pidge—Miss Musser—I mean Mrs. Melton—told me something of the kind."

DICKY heard the voice before he saw the man. Standing in an outer room of the Ashrama, the voice of one speaking English in easy, cultured tones reached him. When the door opened he saw several young men sitting upon the floor and a wasted Hindu figure in the center—a little man in a thin turban more like a skull-cap, a homespun loin-cloth, his bare feet beneath him upon a mat of coarse cloth, a rough pillow at his back. The young men about him had risen, but the central figure merely lifted and extended the hand.

"Mr. Cobden, from America," he said, for the benefit of the young men, then added to Dicky direct: "Nagarjuna has made us eager. Your coming is important to us, because in due time we shall have much to say to Americans through such men as you."

Even Nagar withdrew, but one of the boys returned, bringing a chair.

"If you don't mind, I'll try sitting on the

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floor, too," said Dicky. "I'd feel perched with Mr. Gandhi sitting below."

The mahatma smiled.

"I quite appreciate," he said. "I hope you will find in India the same kindness that you gave Nagarjuna in New York."

Dicky had expected power; he found composure. His idea of power was perhaps in part a hang-over from a boyish ideal of a certain American financial executive. Nothing of that in this room; rather, he was conscious of Gandhi's frailness and smallness. This presence called forth impulses to be tender, to lower one's voice, to hurry to bring anything wanted. He was shocked a little at the twisted, battered look of the features. The lips looked pulpy in parts and did not rest together evenly. The smile was curiously slow—tentative, like one in whom understanding dawns. Back of the iron-rimmed spectacles and tired, sad eyes, inured to pain, was the essence of fearlessness. This was the first commanding characteristic to the American.

"Fear," Gandhi was saying, "fear of death makes us devoid both of valor and religion. There is no place for fear in the *Satyagrahi's* heart."

"What is a *Satyagrahi?*" Cobden asked.

"One who is devoted and pledged to truth, to *Satyagraha*. I coined the word, to express our purpose in South Africa. *Satyagraha* is the use of love-force, or soul-force."

Now, curiously, Dicky felt the cleanness of the house, the peace of it, the humming of a *charka* in the next room, a symbol of that peace. He felt Gandhi's face growing upon him out of the shadow, a face that had been dried cleanly by many suns, the features fashioned by a life of direct, unpredatory thinking—the face of a man incapable, even in thought, of hitting below the belt. And now there was to go with the hum of the *charka* the faint fragrance of dried fruit in the air, or that sweetness one breathes in the altitudes where the sun is shining upon the great conifers.

"The world has talked much of the omnipotence of God," Mahatma-ji went on. "India, at last, is preparing to put her faith to test. Passive resistance has been called the weapon of the weak; if this is so, the soul is weaker than the flesh."

There was no pose or show, no straining for force, no adjectives, no similes or shadings of sense—a direct approach, inevitably direct.

Dicky felt suddenly hopeless of ever understanding such directness.

Gandhi resumed:

"If the world believes in the existence of the soul, it must be recognized that soul-force is better than body-force; it is the sacred principle of love which moves mountains. Only those who realize that there is something in man which is superior to the brute nature in him, and that the latter always yields to it, can effectively apply this force, which is to violence, and therefore to all tyranny, all injustice, what light is to darkness. For the exercise of the purest soul-force, prolonged training of the individual soul is an absolute necessity."

For all Dicky knew, his eyes had not turned away from that dark Oriental face. He had been studying, in the way of a word-workman, how fifty years of the world had eroded it. In one moment Gandhi's face was dull and unattractive as a camel-driver's; again it shone with a high, clear calm, like the ideal most of us have of a saint or a priest. Now the instant came, as the words stopped, that Dicky seemed to be looking into the Indian face actually for the first time, and Gandhi was looking *into* him.

The American was uncentered for a second or two, as he had once felt in the quick sag of an air-plane.

ALWAYS, as the Little Man talked on his theme of fearlessness, Dicky remembered Nagar's story of the South African fighter, and contemplated again that look of unearthly calm in the eyes of the man before him. Was it fanaticism—this fearlessness which Gandhi put into practise? Was there a soul-calm back of the human nervous system, a central calm that a man could reach and abide in, that made anything negligible that men might do to the body? Was it worth going after, since every ordinary view-point seemed changed in those who had tried it? Was this, indeed, the quest that made men mad with divine restlessness?

Surely, India was getting him going—he, Dicky Cobden, of the family of trowel-makers! In amazement he realized that he was responding to some stimulus like the finest wine—that if he didn't get out of

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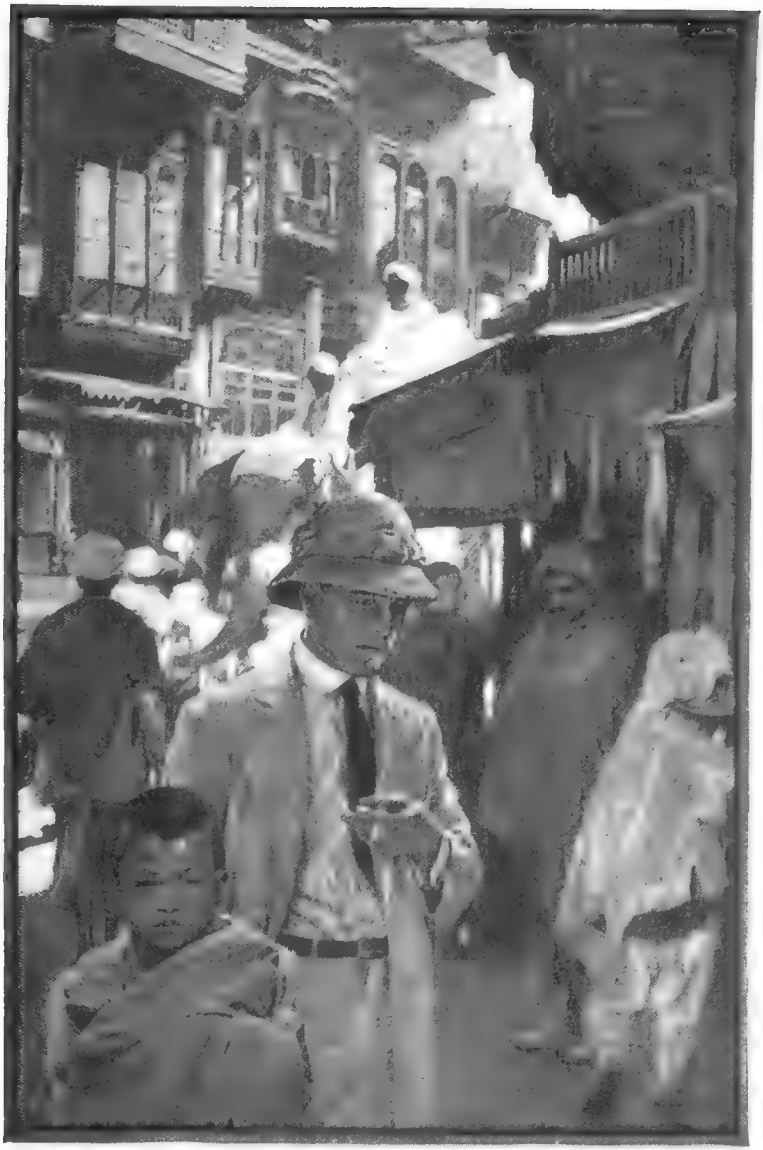

The point of all his fighting was to keep Pidge Musser out of mind. Of course he could not succeed.

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here soon, he would fall to telling his troubles, like a man who has had too many drinks.

The talk now touched upon matters of fasting and celibacy; not that Dicky had any view on such subjects, but was striving to understand Gandhi's use of them as a means.

Apparently, to the Little Man, they were a part of world-politics.

"So in our Ashrama," Gandhi explained, "men and women living and working together must live the celibate life, whether married or unmarried. Marriage brings a woman close together with a man, and they become friends in a special sense, never to be parted in this life or in the lives to come; but I do not think that into that place of life our lusts should necessarily enter."

Dicky had scrambled to his feet from the floor.

"I won't take your time any more just now," he mumbled haltingly.

Mahatma-ji watched him with a look of curious understanding.

Dicky backed out. He was in the street alone.

The young men had not restrained him in the slightest. They had seemed to understand that he must be alone. Even Nagar had only walked at his side a moment in the hall, to say that he would come to the Entresden after dinner. He was alone in the street with the miracle. Somewhere among the Indian's sentences about men and women it had happened—somewhere in there, when he had spoken about—yes; that was it, "about friends in a special sense!"

A pariah dog yelped, running out of a doorway, almost banging into his knees. He was in a narrow street and had to step upon a door-sill while two men passed dragging at a cart. He saw their bare ribs and salt-whitened loin-cloths. The sun was still high, the stillness and heat almost fetid in the byways. He passed a native market-place by the river, and out of all the moving, multicolored crowd he remembered only one parasol of jade green, though he did not see the face beneath. A miracle had happened. India was like a warm presence to him this hour.

His American-trained mind scoffed against the thing alive in him, but his heart held on serenely. What did this little world-warrior with the battered mouth know about love and living with a woman? What did he know about lusts that he spoke so freely of? Did he ever give three years of his life to the one battle—not to hate the woman he loved most under heaven? Or was that particular battle so far back in his experience that he merely spoke of it as one skirmish in the great campaign of fifty years, called "Life?"

Alone at dinner, Dicky conned every word the Little Man had spoken about the young married people who worked together in the Ashrama, of the celibacy they vowed themselves to, of their becoming through marriage "friends in a special sense—for this and all lives." Gandhi talked as if it were a foregone conclusion that there were other lives.

He wasn't tasting his dinner. He came up from the deeps of reflection to realize a waiter was coming toward him, as if in answer to a signal. He also discovered that he had been sitting over his filled plate with one hand lifted—the thumb and fingers brushing together, as if he were close to *her* and it was a bit of her dress or a wisp of her hair between his fingers. His mind could scoff all it pleased, for his heart held serenely to the miracle, and this was the miracle: that Pidge Musser, married or not married, was back alive in his heart, and such a melting pity for her plight had come to him as he sat before the Little Man that he, the hard-headed, had to rise abruptly from the interview and rush away, lest he fall to weeping and explaining all.

THE thing that Richard Cobden had found in the same room with the Little Man wasn't happiness. There was too much pathos in its texture for it to be considered for an instant as belonging to the nature of joy. But it was better than the deadness he had known, good to feel the tissues of his heart alive again, not a leaden lump.

Again, the next day, he went to sit with Mahatma-ji, but nothing happened, though he remained two hours. He had been naive enough half to believe that all he had to do was to enter the presence of the Indian leader to get this living thing back in his heart—this pain that had the sweetness of life in it.

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Two days afterward, however, while he was deeply involved with Gandhi's explanation of *Satyagraha*, taking notes so that he could put down the other's words almost exactly, the sense of Pidge Musser's presence and plight was suddenly with him again, renewed within him, the pity of it almost more than he could endure.

There were hours when Dicky could believe almost anything at the Ashrama, where he was permitted to sit with the native students, Gandhi often halting his speech in Hindi or Gujarati to talk English for the American's benefit. And occasionally, during his long evening talks with Nagar on the banks of the Sabarmati or under the muffle-winged punkas in the Entresden room, his mind had sudden extensions of range. Still, he had a vague foreboding that he would not be able to hold all this hopeful stuff when he was away from India, for slowly and surely he was being pressed to depart.

"America needs your loyalty now," Nagar had said in effect several times.

"But the affairs here are more and more absorbing."

"We will send for you to come back when the curtain actually rises. The drama of India is not being played now, but the play is written. This that you have heard so far is only a rehearsal of minor parts."

In June, a letter came from the *Public Square*, pressing its correspondent to return to France, or at least to some of the points where the American troops were gathering.

As for magazine conditions, Dicky [John Higgins wrote], they couldn't be worse. Our little old *Public Square* has fallen into sorry ways. A lot of American business men, who once gloried in their breadth and toleration, have taken positions in what they call the Department of Justice, and their business is to probe into speeches and writings like ours. They are looking for heresies of citizenship. If you've had a German neighbor for thirty years and learned cautiously to respect the beast, you're supposed now to know him no more in trade or whist or home or club, nor his woman nor children. But I only meant to tell you that the *Public Square* has nothing to say, nothing to do. We tried a critical study of the architecture of a Federal building in Des Moines, and we're being looked into for unpatriotic motives. If we're not suspended for making a croak, we'll likely be forced to suspend for not having the breath. Otherwise, we're quite well, and the trade world—you ought to be able to hear American business boom even in India, if you're not too far inland.

Everybody's Magazine, March, 1923

This was the first time that John Higgins' views looked less than ultimate to Dicky Cobden's eyes. He made an arrangement, however, personally to help the *Public Square* to keep alive. About this time the Little Man was called to Madras, and Dicky saw him into his third-class coach with a catch in his throat and a sadness of heart. A day or two later he left Nagar at the station where he had found him—and the day looked a trifle gloomy from the windows of the Bombay Interprovincial.

RUFUS MELTON was having his coffee at Miss Claes's table. It was noon and July. The package of mail left at Fifty-four Harrow Street had not forgotten Rufus this morning. Another story had gone through, and he felt that the day was all right. It looked to him like a very good day to play and to shop. Miss Claes came in from the kitchen in a fresh white dress and canvas shoes, nor did she come empty-handed. A crystal-and-silver marmalade-jar was in one hand, and a plate of cold ham in the other. These she placed on the cloth before him, and noting that the loaf of rye bread lay uncut upon the board, she went to a drawer for the knife.

Rufus dropped a cube of sugar into his coffee-cup and contemplated Miss Claes's ankle. His mind became industrious. He was thinking how he would describe the ankle if he were using it in a story. He thought of several narrow white things. There was a white greyhound, but you couldn't say a woman's ankle was like that. There was a white pleasure-yacht on the river, with narrow lines and clipper bow that bore a remarkable likeness, but it would take a paragraph to put over. The boneheads would think of boiler-plate. Then there was a birch tree and a polar bear and a snowy church spire—anyway, the ankle was fetching.

"You look great this morning, Miss Claes, and see here——"

He spread out his letter from a most rich and inaccessible editorial room.

"How interesting, Rufus! You are doing so well with your stories."

"Pidge thinks they're rotten." He chuckled. No comment from Miss Claes. "She'd have me sit in a cave and growl over a story—bringing one out every three

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months for editors to muss their hair over and finally turn down. That's the life!"

Miss Claes had turned to the cabinet of dishes, the double doors of which were open. One might have thought that Rufus was now entirely involved in the subject of Pidge's idea of stories, but in reality he was studying Miss Claes's waist and throat and profile. She took his coffee-cup to the kitchen to be refilled, and when she came back close to his chair, Rufus's arm moved engagingly round her hips, his face turning up with a questioning, boyish smile.

"What is it, Rufus?" she asked, making no movement to be free from his arm.

"You're mighty charming this morning," he said.

"It's a charming morning."

His arm tightened a little, yet she stood perfectly still. Rufus was now in a quandary. This sitting posture had its diminishing aspect; yet to rise and disentangle his feet from under the table, he must loosen his arm or show an uncouth line to the camera, so to speak. Rufus rarely broke his rhythms in these little performances; certainly not when the going was as delicate as this. Miss Claes had become especially desirable because of an exciting uncertinty about her, and an affectation, at least, of allegiance to Pidge. If he had only had had sense enough to turn his chair round before taking her in!

Presently Rufus reached the conclusion that it was better to draw her down to him than take a chance of getting his arm round her again.

She came—no resistance, no rigidity. His lips found her cheek, and an indescribable and most disturbing fragrance from her neck and hair. Or was it the extraordinary coolness of everything that disturbed, or the words gently whispered in his ear?

"You're such a lonely boy! You don't understand at all what you are really dying for."

Rufe was disappointed. So hers was the mothering game. Besides, his position was uncomfortable, knees under the table, and his coffee was getting cold. So he let her go, after all, in order to reach a standing posture, but by the time he was free of the chair and the table, Miss Claes had vanished without haste into the kitchen. Rufus now stood, dangling inconveniently between his breakfast and her return.

She came; he went to her. Her dark eyes were utterly calm, no traceable deepening of the color in her face. She halted, but lightly held in the two hands before her was a gold-edged dish with a little golden globe of butter in the center.

Rufus dropped back in his chair and lifted his coffee-cup. What on earth could a man do with a woman holding a butter-dish?

"It's hell to be fastidious," he thought, in regard to his own inhibitions.

SOMETHING delectable had gone out of the July day. Miss Claes was no nearer his understanding than before. Evidently she liked being petted, but it was her particular freshness from boots up this morning that he had become involved in, not her maternal aspects. Pidge would have the laugh on him, because these women could never keep anything to themselves. He didn't mind anything about Pidge so much as her laugh.

Altogether, this little brush at breakfast left him unsatisfied—and this was a play-day.

"Thank you so much," he said at the door.

She gave him a pink, an old-fashioned white one.

"The butter-and-egg-man brought in some from his door-yard garden in Yonkers," she said.

"Thanks again," said Rufus, and started up-stairs.

There were voices from one of the rooms on the main floor, but the second was entirely empty and silent until a rear door opened and Fanny Gallup looked out.

"Hello!" she said in a far-reaching whisper.

Fanny's "Hello!" was one of the best of her little ways. She said it as one would cast a silken noose.

Rufe looked back and down. On certain mornings he would have growled an answer and tramped on; but there was something white and calling about the face in the dim shadows this morning, and for a wonder the kids weren't squalling. "Oh, come in! Come on in!" was in his ears. Her bare arm was raised. The lacing was gone from the smock, moreover, and there was a pull

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for the moment in Fanny's sad little bosom. He didn't miss the point that the smock had once belonged to Pidge. He halted, looking back and listening again. Then he tiptoed in and the door shut. Not a great while afterward the door opened and the crying of children was heard. Fanny was moaning:

"Don't go 'way! Oh, don't go 'way!"

But Rufus breasted past her, muttering within himself,

"Never again!"

THAT evening Pidge came home more pleased with her work than for a long time. The *Public Square* wasn't going under. Dicky Cobden had been heard from and signified himself behind the weekly for a stated sum that would keep it alive. John Higgins hadn't shown her the letter, but he had turned to her with it in his hand, and for the first time she had caught a trace of his old delight in having her about. Moreover, Dicky was in Europe now, having written the letter, on the eve of his departure from India, via Suez. He wasn't coming through to New York—not just at present, John Higgins said.

She mentioned these affairs to Rufus during their supper in the Harrow Street neighborhood. He wasn't hungry. He had bought a golf suit that looked very well on him, he said, but evidently now he was troubled how to use it. He hadn't done any work so far to-day and felt less like it than ever.

"You folks are dippy about this Cobden," he said. "Every time an article of his comes out in the *Passé Square*, you gather together to read it as if it were a tablet from the Messiah. What's he to you, Pan—a little bit tender on your Dicky?"

"A little bit tender," she said.

Rufus felt abused. He glared at her. This sort of thing had come up before. Rufe had come to look at Pidge as his picket-pin. He had a long rope, and everything was all right so long as the pin held. But her manner now would uncenter any man.

"I'd like to get out of Harrow Street," he growled. "Every time I put my address on the top of a manuscript, I feel it's a knock rather than a boost. I've been tempted to get an agent, if for no other reason than to have his address for the magazines to work through. I was talking with Redge Walters, who bought this story to-day, and he said: 'Rufe, you sure fall for the little bobbed heads down in the Village, don't you? Why don't you come up-town and live in New York?"

"I like Harrow Street," said Pidge.

"You don't make a secret of it, either," he went on. "Of course, Miss Claes is kind and all that, but we pay for what we get, and there's no question in my mind about the pictures in her gallery being hung crooked."

"If you've finished your supper, let's go," said Pidge.

"She breathes! The arctic princess!" Rufe shivered. Pidge didn't answer. "And that second floor needs policing up," Rufe resumed. "I haven't taken it to heart so much about living in the Village, but that second floor's a tenement patch. Every time I go up and down——"

"Fanny's my fault, and Miss Claes accepts it with never a murmur," Pidge said, wide-eyed. "I'd look well running off up-town and leaving Fanny there. Oh, Rufe, don't you ever see any fault except on the outside?"

Right then Rufe said something.

"What's the use of me looking after my own faults when you've got them all in hand like Shetland ponies?"

Pidge rose. The black waters were welling up in her breast—a sense of isolation that Dicky Cobden had never succeeded in picturing in all his twenty thousand words from the Kong. It was so true. His faults were with her day and night, and the greatest of them was his entire irresponsibility. It touched her in the sorest quick to have him point out that Fanny lowered the values, not only of the second floor but the whole Harrow Street house.

Pidge never passed Fanny's door but she was pressed by something within to enter; yet her whole personal nature rebelled. Often, for hours at her work, there was a gloomy, semiconscious activity within her that kept urging its notice up to her mind. When she stopped to think, she would realize that she hadn't gone into Fanny's room that day or that she must drop in to-night. It was so now, only more than ever, because Rufe had

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located her private horror and brought it to speech.

On the second floor, returning from supper, she told Rufe to go on up, that she meant to stop in Fanny's room for a few minutes.

"What to — Come on, Pan; let's go to a show somewhere," he said suddenly.

She shook her head.

"I don't want to go out. I've got to see Fanny——"

He caught her sleeve.

"It's too hot to go up. Let's go somewhere. Let's get on a 'bus and go uptown—" She was too occupied in the thing she hated to do to notice his concern. He spoke again. "I'm not going up there. You're colder than a frog to live with, anyway——"

"Go out somewhere, Rufe, if you want to. Don't mind me."

She didn't hear his words, but she heard the crying of Fanny's children. The door opened. Fanny stood there, but looked past her, over Pidge's shoulder, and, queerly enough, Pidge thought of the words: "And Jove to Jove." The hall door was then shut.

"Wot you comin' in here for—to scold me some more, Redhead?"

"No, Fanny; to see you and the——"

"I know why you come all right. To find fault—that's why, and you needn't kill yourself, because I'm gettin' along so-so. Little old Fanny's holdin' her own—and that's more'n you're doin'." Pidge looked into the crib. A core of fetid vapor hung above it, and Fanny's words seemed to blend with it. "Think you can hold your job and hold a man, too, don't you? Oh, yes; Redhead knows how. Redhead's got it all worked out. Redhead can tell us all how to do it—oh, yes——"

"What's the matter, Fanny? Are you scolding so I won't start? I didn't come to start something. Just came to see you—if I could do anything. Wouldn't you like to go out for an hour and have me stay with the—with the——"

Pidge always halted this way.

"Worried—eh? Worried about somethin'?" Fanny piped up. "Well, I'm not tellin' anything—except you ain't got your little mastiff tied to no corset-string——"

"What are you talking about, Fanny?"

"Like to know, wouldn't you?"

Pidge felt cold. She cared to know what the other meant. She didn't say so, however. She knew a better way—an effective way that seemed to come out of depths within her that knew vast pasts and many lands, all strategies of men and maids, all secrets of tent and purdah, lattice and veil.

"Don't trouble, Fanny. I just came in to see how you were getting on. I'm so sorry for you, you know."

"Sorry!" Fanny laughed.

"So sorry, dear—that you're penned in this way—and Albert missing."

"Sorry!" Fanny screamed her mirth.

"Don't you want me to be sorry for you, dear?" Pidge trailed. "Why, I haven't been nearly so good as I meant to be——"

"Well, you dam' little itch-face—talkin' to me about bein' sorry! Who'n heller you to tell me about bein' sorry? Who'n heller you to talk to me about me gettin' penned in an' Albert missin' when you can't keep your own man—when you don't carry your own babies? Who'n heller you, anyway?"

Then Fanny got down to business and spoke of spades.

"NEVER mind, dear," said Pidge. "We can't attend to everything. I'm going out to get you some ice-cream. I'll be back in a few minutes."

She was in the street. She brought back a paper pail without haste. Fanny had begun to cry.

"Don't feel badly," Pidge said, washing a saucer and spoon.

Fanny cried on. Pidge served her a large dish, and a smaller one for the older child. Then from the paper she spooned tiny mouthfuls into the face in the crib—spooned until there was sleep from the novel coolness of the sweet. Then Pidge patted Fanny's shoulder as she passed out, promising to come back sometime tomorrow.

Up-stairs she found Rufe, shirt open at the throat, standing by the back window. The light in the room was heavily shaded. He looked to her covertly, half expectantly.

"Want to read something?" he said in a pleasant tone.

"No. I'm going to bed," said Pidge.

The sequel to Pidge's disillusionment is one of the most interesting portions of this remarkable novel. See the next instalment, in April EVERYBODY'S—out March 15th.

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The Treasures

Ambition, John Markham Believed, Is All That a Fellow Needs to Get On. He Gave No Thought to the Bill for Retribution That Might Be Presented for Payment Some Day

By Gilbert Frankau

BECAUSE a man is waster-born and scoundrel-bred, because he respects neither God's law nor man's pocket nor the miracle of budding womanhood, because for sheer lust of gain he has committed murder, arson, barratry and false witness, because his real name happens to be a byword in every port from Archangel to Wellington and an outrage on every sea from the sapphire Caribbean to the silver Banda, one need not presume him incapable of the lesser human frailties, such as ambition, self-deception and the dreaming of incongruous dreams. Nor, necessarily, need one take it for granted that his life-history is written on his face.

John Markham's, indeed (the change of name had coincided with his change of circumstances), as he paced pompously out of his Pall Mall banker's and pompously up St. James's Street toward the club which knew nothing of his past, showed a supreme benignity. The plump cheeks had been newly shaven; the hair, brown still though somewhat scant under the upcurled brim of the Bond Street "topper," newly unguented. The nose, prominent almost to bulbousness, and the exiguous graying side-whiskers might have been an admiral's; the eyes—big eyes they were, dark and forceful, with a hint of red fire in the iris—a financier's.

Two young women, barely emerged from flapperhood, in the open-neck jumpers, short skirts and artificial silk hose of the 1922 business girl, came tripping by; and for a moment John Markham's eyes flickered toward them. Then, looking straight ahead, he resumed his pompous pacing.

There was something portly in the pace, something of heaviness—as though the big figure in the cutaway coat and slate-gray trousers had lost not only the elasticity of youth but the wiriness of middle age. A doctor, on the watch for patients, might have meditated the possibilities of early paralysis.

John Markham, however, striding flat-footed up the steps of his club, meditated no such possibility. He felt well—amazingly well. Over his cocktail, sipped solemnly and alone in the comfortable saddle-bag chair by the big bow window, he diagnosed that well-being.

"Ambition!" diagnosed Markham, surveying the come and go of St. James's Street. "That's the ticket! That's what a fellow needs if he means to get on in this world. If I hadn't had ambition, I might have gone under, like so many of 'em went under. Without ambition, I might have drunk myself to death—like poor Sanderson. Or put a bullet through my head—like that old mate of mine when little Marie told him——"

But, at that, the man who had not always been John Markham shivered a little, despite the steam heat of the smoking-room; and, tapping an old-fashioned hand-bell to summon the waiter, ordered himself another cocktail.

Drinking, self-deception came to his aid. Self-deception, dropping a vinous veil

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over the past, showed him to himself as a worthy citizen of the great metropolis whose traffic purred almost noiselessly past the big double window. A prosperous citizen, too—one who, having come to wealth in that sensible period of life when sixty seems as far off as fifty seems close behind, meant to enjoy his wealth discreetly, adding to it, if the opportunity offered, but never—oh, never—running any more risks.

"One needn't gamble," thought that prosperous citizen; "and one needn't be mean. One's only got to draw one's dividends and spend 'em—spend 'em on one's own pleasures. Not the old sort of pleasures, of course"—self-deception, for the fraction of a second, had dropped the veil—"but the pleasures one's always missed. A snug flat—a little house, perhaps. In the West End. Right bung in the middle of the West End. A day's racing occasionally. Theatres every now and again. Little supper-parties." He smacked his thin lips at that. "Billiards. Cards. A car. It ought to run to a car——"

He put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, leaned back in the chair and began to plan comfortably, quietly, methodically his future. Till, planning, the dream—the old, the incongruous dream which had for long haunted the recesses of his imagination—swam curiously into vision.

"HELLO, Markham!" The voice of the man who had put him up for the club which, once exclusive, was nowadays glad enough to admit any one with "nothing against him"—interrupted the dream. Markham took his thumbs out of the armholes of his waistcoat and sat up.

"Hello, young fellow!" he said affably. "Lunching here?"

"I thought of doing so."

"Care to take it with me?"

"Thanks very much." The Honourable St. Clair Hilary fiddled with his tie, pulled up his "sponge-bags" and dropped into the opposite chair.

"Have a drink?" went on Markham.

The Honourable St. Clair accepted a whisky and soda—his was the accepting type—and, wiping a drop of it from his weak chin, cast a speculative eye over his host. Having been introduced to Markham quite fortuitously at their banker's, it had seemed to the Honourable St. Clair the naturalest thing in the world to utilize the introduction to "one of our Colonial clients" for his own purposes. Hence the club membership, and hence—gratitude being an obligation frequently recognized by Colonials—the speculative eye.

"I was thinkin' about you only this mornin'," began the Honourable St. Clair, adjusting a monocle in that eye of speculation. "D'you remember tellin' me you wanted a house?"

"A flat would suit me better." Markham, who had dealt with many St. Clairs in his time, trod warily.

"Well"—the other waved a smoothing hand—"this ain't exactly a house. It's a kind of a maisonette. Belongs to a pal of mine. Poor chap's had rotten luck. Got mixed up with the time when he was sending a telegram to his bookies. Not"—Markham's face showed his distaste for such irregularities—"that it's really *his* place at all. He only put his furniture in, so to speak. But the other chap, the chap it really belongs to, says that if any one'll take the furniture off his hands—my pal had to skip before he could find the rent—he, that's the johnnie who buys the furniture, can have the lease for a mere song. By the way, *you* haven't any furniture of your own, have you?"

"No." Markham spoke slowly. "I sold all mine before I came over."

"It's pretty good stuff, most of it. Poor old Dicky used to go in for that sort of thing. Antiques, you know. Look here"—brightly—"why shouldn't we go and have a look at the place after lunch?"

Markham, after some demur, accepted the suggestion.

"It's a gentleman's place, of course?" he threw out, as they went in to luncheon. "Good neighborhood, I mean—accomodation for one's man and all that sort of thing?"

"Oh, rather!" reassured Hilary. "Dicky used to keep a brace of slaves—cook and parlor-maid, you know—in the top floor, and a boy somewhere or other. Always did himself well, did Dicky."

Over their meal, Markham relapsed into silence. The offer of the maisonette, synchronizing with the final elaboration of his plans, seemed propitious. "If it ain't too barefaced a robbery," he thought, "I might take the place." And again the old

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vision, the old incongruous dream, swam curiously into ken.

For that Markham's dream *was* incongruous even Markham, toying absent-minded with his favorite lunch-dish, shepherd's pie, admitted. Off and on in his varied life he had desired—and acquired—much; but always, hitherto, the great desire, the constant vision, the one supreme delight had escaped him. Never, never until now had he been in a position to keep a man servant, a real old-fashioned English man servant, the sort of retainer one referred to as "my man" or "my butler."

That visionary "my man"—"my butler" was an afterthought—stood to John Markham for the peak, the very pinnacle, the utmost summit of ambition, symbolized, in one white-shirted apotheosis, the entire material mountain-climb. Constantly, when either by hook or by crook—but mostly by crook—had it seemed possible that he should ever scale the mountain, "my man" had materialized before his inward eyes, luring him on. So that, even now, he could have described "my man's" every attribute—his silvery hair, his respectful look, his thin, clean-shaven lips, his five-foot-eight of silent-footed, silent-handed deftness, his deferential: "Your tea, sir; and what suit will you wear this morning?" his whole unperturbed and imperturbable aura of servitude made perfect.

"POOR Dicky's" maisonette, inspected in a leisurely manner after luncheon, made an immediate and pleasurable impression. Situated in the heart of that bachelor land which is bounded by Park Lane on the one side and by Regent Street on the other, over an exiguous millinery establishment so fashionable and so exclusive that one hardly dared call it a shop, the maisonette possessed its own green-painted front door, tiny square hall and carved staircase. Mounting this staircase, the visitors found, on the first floor, a brown-paneled dining-room and a white-paneled library; on the second, a big square bedroom, the blankets still on its Empire bedstead, a bathroom and a tiny dressing-room, and on the third, in addition to the "two-servant" bedroom foretold by the Honourable St. Clair, an attic and a kitchenette.

The whole place had been furnished with the sole object of a man's comfort. Its padded chairs, its padded sofas rested the back; its shaded lamps rested the eye. Every room, every landing, every stair-tread was thick-carpeted from skirting to skirting. Every curtain—heavy velvety curtains they were, all of them—drew with a touch. The oak dining-table was firm as a butcher's block; the mahogany wardrobe capacious as a tailor's show-case. From hall to attic, electric radiators of the most expensive type supplemented the open fireplaces.

"I've seen worse," commented Markham. "What's the name of your landlord friend, and how much does he want for the sticks?"

The Honourable St. Clair looked down at his spats and named a figure.

"Pretty stiff, ain't it?"

"Well, it is and it isn't. This sort of stuff, you know"—the amateur house-agent tapped the dining-table as he spoke—"costs money. And then there's the lease—even without the furniture, that'd be worth quite a packet these days."

"Well, I'll think it over," said Markham.

And he did think it over for the whole of that evening, deciding himself, with every puff of his expensive cigar, more and more inclined to purchase.

For the place, quite apart from the excellence of its antiques and the thickness of its carpets and the impenetrability of its curtains—good points all, especially those curtains—held the supreme fascination that it might—nay, must—house that supreme delight, "my man." Almost, visualizing those quiet rooms, Markham could see, moving sedulous among them, the silver-haired, white-shirted apotheosis of his incongruous dreaming.

"It's a robbery, though," he finished thinking. "A downright robbery. I bet that fellow Hilary'll turn a pretty penny out of it if I do buy."

Morning, however, with its comfortless awakening in the badly run Jermyn Street service-flat, brought more visions—visions of himself turning over in that mahogany-and-ormolu Empire bedstead to perceive "my man" busied at the big bow-fronted wardrobe, to hear "my man's" deferential: "Shall I prepare your bath, sir?"

One month later, still acting on the Honourable St. Clair Hilary's advice,

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"John Markham, Esq." advertised to ask whether "any gentleman" could recommend a married couple to "take entire charge" of his establishment.

"YOUR wife's a good cook, you say?"

"Oh, yes, sir! She is, if I may make so bold as to say so, a very good cook indeed."

"You both have your references?"

"We have seven years' written character from our last place, sir."

"And you quite understand, both of you, that if I do take you on, you'll have no outside help?"

"We thoroughly understand that, sir. And if you do decide to take us, we feel quite sure we'll be able to give you every satisfaction. As a matter of fact, sir"—confidentially—"we'd *rather* manage without any outside assistance."

The clean-shaven butler in the blue suit—his hat in his hand and his wife at his side—looked deferentially across the oak of "poor Dicky's" dining-table at his prospective employer, and his prospective employer, not to put too fine a point on it, stared back at him.

For James Gosse, as John Markham had realized from the moment he and his wife entered the room, though a trifle fatter and a trifle more oleaginous than the "my man" of incongruous dreams, appeared in all other respects the very spit of him. James Gosse's wife, moreover, was French. "Jolly fine cooks as a rule, these Frenchies," thought the starer.

"What wages are you asking?" he went on.

"Well, sir"—the man spoke exactly as John Markham—had always imagined "my man" would speak—"we *were* getting a hundred and twenty."

"Rather a lot, ain't it?"

"Eef you think eet ees too much, sare"—the woman, who had hitherto taken no part in the conversation, suddenly intervened—"we would take a leetle less. You see, sare, we are anxious, very anxious, to find a good place—such as yours, sare."

For the fraction of a second something in her voice jangled a faint chord in Markham's memory. His eyes, as though expectant of a recognition, focused themselves on her face. But the face conveyed nothing to his brain, and after that one faint jangle, the chord of memory went dumb. So that he saw only a flat-bosomed, undersized, middle-aged Gallic woman, wrinkled of cheek, thin-lipped, hatchet-nosed and hatchet-chinned, black of eyeball and blacker of eyelash, her fingers in their cheap cotton gloves fidgeting on the handle of her cheap umbrella.

"Places such as yours, sare," continued Mrs. Gosse, "places with bachelor gentlemen are very deefficult to get."

And "my man," as though confirming her dictum, added,

"I'm sure we'd be quite willing, sir, to leave the question of wages to you."

"Let's have a look at your references," said Markham pompously, and, scrutinizing them, made up his mind. "I'll give you a hundred a year," he said. "Neither more nor less. And if you take it, you've got to understand, both of you, that you'll have to work."

"I can assure you that neither the wife nor I are afraid of work, sir," replied Gosse, more oleaginous and more deferential than ever.

"And when can you come in?"

"Whenever suits your convenience, sir."

"Well"—really, the likeness to "my man" was extraordinary, quite extraordinary—"you can't come in before Monday, because I'm going away for the week-end. But if Monday suits you——"

"Monday would suit us admirably, sir."

The Gosses, after some further palaver, departed, and that night, Markham, dining at his club, informed the Honourable St. Clair,

"Thanks to you, young fellow, it looks as though I've got a pair of treasures."

Nor was Markham's expectation disappointed. Indeed, from the moment when, returning—as he took care to inform them—from a "bit of a blow by the sea," he found the Gosses and their luggage already waiting for him at the green-painted front door of "poor Dicky's" maisonette, "treasures" seemed the only word applicable to their domestic prowess. "My butler" did all, and more than all, than "my man" had ever done in dreams. "My butler's wife" lagged no whit behind him.

Within a week John Markham knew the pair indispensable. Within a fortnight he was boasting about them at the club.

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Within a month, just for the joy of "busting 'em," he was giving little dinner-parties to all his less fortunate cronies.

"Nice place, ain't it?" John Markham used to say at those parties. "Kept well, too. Not a speck of dust anywhere. Trust my man fer that! While as for that woman's cooking—Dinner ready, eh, Gosse? Punctual to the second! That's the ticket!—it's enough to make your mouth water."

They were rather a silent couple; but that, after the constant chatter of the Jermyn Street char-ladies, was true luxury; and under their deft, economical management, the establishment ran quietly as a cutter over smooth seas.

Its owner hardly needed to command that cutter. He had only to express the half of a wish for "my man" and "my man's wife" to fulfil the whole of it. No task seemed too trivial, no duty too arduous for them. They were discreet, too; and soon, in addition to his "little dinner-parties," John Markham began giving other parties, *tête-à-tête* supper-parties over which he would whisper, twiddling at the champagne-wires: "I told my man and his wife that they could go to bed early. So we're alone. Quite alone. You won't mind that, will you, my dear?"

For six months—thanks, as he was first to admit, to his "treasures"—Markham lived like a fighting cock. The something portly, the something of heaviness in him had become accentuated—but pleasurably accentuated. If he grew fat, fat as his dividends, it was with the fat of good health, of prosperity. "If I were to buy a car," he used to laugh, "I'd go to sixteen stun in no time." So he didn't worry himself to buy a car. He didn't worry about anything. Races, billiards, the theatre, his dinner-parties with "my butler" standing dutifully behind his chair, and his supper-parties, with "my man" gone discreetly to bed, contented him.

As for the past, the past had never been. Nothing of it remained, not even that chord of memory which the voice of "my man's wife" had jangled to vibration.

BUT after "the treasures" had been with him half a year, another chord out of the past jangled—jangled ever so faintly to Gosse's respectful question, uttered one morning as his master sat, tired-eyed from the overnight *tête-à-tête*, at his untouched breakfast.

"I beg your pardon, sir," questioned Gosse, "but are you aware that we have firearms in the house?"

"Firearms?" Markham started. "What firearms?"

"Well, sir"—"my man's" blue eyes displayed the deferential blank of custom—"when the wife was tidying the library last evening, she found a pistol."

"Where did she manage to find that?"

"In the bottom drawer of your desk. If you remember, sir, you told her yesterday that you wanted those drawers put tidy."

"Did I, though, Gosse?" With an effort, John Markham managed to laugh.

"Oh, yes, sir. You told us both." "My man's" voice was glib. "But you didn't mention the pistol, sir; so it rather frightened the wife. And if I may be allowed to say so, sir, nowadays one has to have a permit for pistols."

"Oh, all right. I'll get a permit. Where does one go? To the police?"

"I expect so, sir."

Gosse went out, closing the door.

"Damn it!" muttered Markham. "I thought I'd locked that drawer."

Naturally enough, he did not go to the police. Instead, he bought himself a safe and kept the key of it on his watch-chain. Into that safe went the revolver, a packet of cartridges, the most important of his papers and various other reminders of the past. For now the past, try as he would to kill all memories of it, began an intermittent jangling in his mind.

"Don't get careless," jangled the chords of the past. "Even the best of servants pry."

Soon, unaccountably, Markham began to be nervous about the Gosses. Soon, covertly, he was watching them, speculating about them. Domestically, they were perfect. But—but wasn't there something uncanny about their very perfection? Why did they never have a friend to visit them? Why did they keep so infernally quiet? They were like cats—ship's cats. One hardly heard them as they moved up and down the thickly carpeted staircase. When they went out, when they came in, the front door made hardly a sound. One could never be certain—absolutely certain—that they *had* gone out unless one went up to

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their bedroom. And why, when one did go up to their bedroom, did one always find the door of it locked?

That locked door worried Markham.

Presently, from nervousness of his "treasures," he passed to fear of them. What if the Gosses had an inkling of his past? What if they knew how he spent those evenings when they were told "not to wait up"? Wouldn't it, on the whole, be better —despite all their perfections—to get rid of them?

But to get rid of the Gosses, to risk the domestic discomforts in which most of his cronies lived seemed madness—utter madness. The Gosses, all said and done, couldn't know anything about the past. While as for those evenings when they were told to go to bed—even if they did know about those evenings, what did it matter? Wasn't a Londoner's house his castle? Couldn't a man, once inside his own green-painted front door, do just as he pleased?

"I'm not doing anything illegal," thought the man who called himself John Markham.

Still, one didn't want to feel that one was being pryed upon. One didn't want to imagine, as one sat solitary over dinner, that eyes—even the most deferential—were boring into the back of one's neck or, as one let one's self in with one's latch-key, that other eyes, black-lashed and black-pupiled, had been spying for one's return from the top of the staircase.

One didn't like to think, either, that—except for the safe—there wasn't a single nook or cranny where one could hide things. Little things. A bit of ribbon, say—or a hairpin—or a scented pocket-handkerchief.

IT MUST not be imagined that this nervousness, this fear, this obsession that his servants were spying on him came with any sudden revelation to the man who called himself Markham. The process of his enlightenment was horribly gradual. Materially, nothing in his circumstances altered. He still lived like a fighting cock. Whatever reasons the Gosses might have for watching him—and often, for days at a time, it seemed fantastic to imagine that they *were* watching him—their hands continued their perfect ministrations to his personal comfort. Everything in the maisonette—the mahogany, the oak, the brass, the glass, the tableware—shone bright as the Georgian silver he had begun to collect. No fleck of cigar-ash marked the thick carpets. The "little dinners" were still exquisitely cooked, exquisitely served. His bath-water was always boiling, his Burgundy always tempered. Dusk saw every curtain drawn. The slightest hint of chill in the air switched on, as though by magic, the electric radiators. And when the full year brough back winter, never a grumble countered his demand for "a jolly good coal fire" in the library grate.

"The wife thought, sir," said Gosse, as he lit that fire for the first time, "that perhaps you'd like one in your bedroom, too. I expect, sir, you find London a bit cold after the tropics."

At which Markham, striving to recollect when "my man" or "my man's wife" could have overheard him discussing the tropics, looked up as though to put the question.

Already, however, he was beyond questioning the Gosses. He could only watch them fearfully, hoping against hope that one or other of them would give him some excuse, some reasonable excuse, to sack them.

But the Gosses continued impeccable; and presently, as winter bleakened and the rainy days grew shorter, Markham, in search of that excuse, began to prowl, ship's cat after ship's cats, about the house. He took to supervising their chores—the sweeping, the dusting, the cooking, the laying of the table. His supervision astonishingly met with no resentment. Silent for the most part, always respectful when he spoke to them, "my man" and "my man's wife" continued at their tasks. He grew to hate their tasks, the very hands that performed them—the man's fat and deft, the woman's bony and efficient. Waking, sweat-sodden with apprehension, in the box-cushioned luxury of his Empire bedstead, he used to imagine those hands reaching for his throat.

Christmas came, and with it an increase of apprehension. Now, fearful of being alone with the Gosses, he took to lunching at his club, transferred his tawdry *tête-à-têtes* to tawdry restaurants. Now, if he mealed at home, it was always in company, with poker cronies or racing cronies who would sit up till dawn over the card-tables and the whisky-glasses.

Time and again he made up his mind to

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get rid of "the treasures." But always, just as he was about to give them notice, apprehension forbade. Till, finally, he knew himself afraid to get rid of them—afraid lest they might know too much.

Christmas passed, and with its passing his apprehension changed to terror. The chorus of the past, jangling and jangling every time he guessed "my man's" footfalls padding up and down the stairs, warned him of imminent disaster. Now, greater than his fear of being alone with them was his terror of leaving his "treasures" alone in the house. It seemed to him that they were guarding some secret—some terrible secret—some secret that concerned his own past!

For why, if there were no secret, should they keep their bedroom door locked? Always locked—even when they were both at home. And they were always at home now—curse them! Always—both of them.

OH, BUT they had been fools—fools! He had told them that they were working too hard, that they needed a day off—both of them. And now they were gone. Gone at last! Gone for the whole day. That was the green-painted door—the front door—clicking to behind them. Now he could find out—find out their secret.

Very quietly the man who called himself John Markham rose from his chair by the glowing fire, opened the safe, took out what he needed and tiptoed from the library up the thickly carpeted stairs to the top of the house. *Their* door, of course, was locked; but the door of the kitchenette stood open. He could see, as he unrolled the wash-leather tool-case, the gleam of crockery on its hooks, the sheen of a glass-fronted cupboard, the polished nickel of the gas-stove. Everything in order. In perfect order.

What wonderful servants they were! Wasn't it foolish to suspect them—to be afraid of them? Hadn't he, in case of need, his revolver—the revolver in the safe down-stairs? "It's only nerves," he muttered. "Nerves! *They* haven't got any secret." And yet, if they had no secret, why should their bedroom door be locked?

Markham's fingers trembled a little as he took the chisel from his tool-case and knelt to insert it between lock and jamb. Vaguely he thought, "When they come back, they'll find out what I've done." As if that mattered! As if anything mattered except to open the door, to find out their secret.

He withdrew the chisel, felt for his gouge, his hammer, cut the first sliver from the flimsy woodwork and went on with his work.

In ten minutes the work was done. Deliberately he rose from his knees. Deliberately he leaned his shoulder against the door. And the door, with a last splintering of woodwork, opened.

For a moment John Markham's dark eyes flickered, apprehensive, about the room. There seemed no need for apprehension. The bedroom, as the kitchenette, was in scrupulous order. "My man's" dress clothes lay, ready for the evening, on "my man's" bedstead. There were clean towels on the wash-hand-stand, filled water-jugs in the china basins. In one corner, boots and shoes made a patch of polished black on the polished green of the linoleum. The door of the wardrobe stood a little ajar.

"I've been a fool," muttered the relieved Markham.

And then, suddenly, his eyes focused themselves on the chest of drawers. There was a cheap mirror on the chest of drawers—and a crucifix, an ivory crucifix. Close to the crucifix stood a photograph—the photograph of a girl, of a very young girl, with flowers in her dark hair.

Very slowly, like one self-hypnotized, the man who had called himself John Markham moved toward that photograph. His eyes, as he lifted it to the light, were heavy with memories.

"Marie!" he muttered. "Marie!"

He twitched where he stood. The shutters of the present snapped back, as the played rolls snap back in the piano-player, and he knew himself in a ship—in the cabin of an anchored ship. He realized dimly that the ship was anchored off Martinique, and that if one looked through the port-hole, one would see the lights of Fort de France. But he could not see the lights of Fort de France. Between them and him glimmered a face. Marie's face! Little Marie's tear-stained face! "*Mais non!*" cried little Marie. "Not that, I implore you, *capitaine*. Think of my father, *capitaine!* If he knows, it will kill him."

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The ears of the man who called himself John Markham never heard the feet of the man who called himself James Gosse as they came catlike up the stairs. They heard only a click, the click of a drawn-back pistol-hammer, and a voice, a voice no longer deferential, snarling, "Put that down, you dog!" Automatically, Markham obeyed the voice, and, turning, saw "my man."

"My man" was leaning against the forced door-jamb. In his hand was a revolver—Markham's revolver. Markham wanted to shriek, but the look in "my man's" eyes froze the shriek at his twitching lips.

"Down-stairs," snarled "my man." "Get down-stairs. She's waiting for you."

"Who?" The word was a whisper. "Marie?"

"No. The wife—Marie's sister."

"But you?" The tongue slobbered between Markham's teeth. "Who are you?"

"You wouldn't remember *me*, Captain." The man with the revolver laughed—a slow, terrible laugh. "I was only a steward. One of the stewards you left for dead when you scuttled the *Purachatra*. But never mind me." The laugh rasped. "Get down-stairs. Get down-stairs. Quick!"

"My man" lifted the pistol menacingly, and Markham stumbled past him through the doorway—stumbled, lips twitching, down the staircase.

THE library door still stood open as he had left it when he went up-stairs. His armchair, his own particular armchair, still fronted the fire.

But he realized, as the hand on his collar forced him through the doorway, that the velvet curtains had been drawn, and that the reading-lamp was alight on the low book-shelf. Close to his chair, between the fire-glow and the lamp-glow, knelt Marie's sister, still dressed for the street, as when he had first set eyes on her. And even as when he had first set eyes on her, the fingers in the cheap cotton gloves were fidgeting—fidgeting on a handle, on the handle of a poker—fidgeting it deep and deeper into the heart of the fire. Then he saw straps—stout, rusty buckled straps on the legs, on the arms of the chair.

Again, as "my man" thrust him down into the chair and the woman, uttering never a word, buckled the straps tight about his wrists and ankles, Markham would have shrieked. But he could not shriek. All the bells in his brain were jangling, jangling. Even when the buckle-tongues cut deep into his loose flesh, he could not force a sound from his twitching tongue.

Finally they gagged him, gagged him with thin twine.

And now, at last, Marie's sister spoke with the man who had had his will with Marie.

"Do not be afraid, *capitaine*," said Marie's sister. "We are not going to kill you. Oh, no; we are not going to kill you. We are only going to pay back a leetle, just a leetle of what we owe."

In the firelight her eyes were red-rimmed as a black swan's. She turned to fidget with the poker-handle, and Markham shuddered till the buckle-straps drew blood.

"It must be hot," muttered Marie's sister. "The poker must be very hot. Hotter than the rocks of Martinique when the sun catches them. You remember those rocks, perhaps, *mon capitaine?*"

Still muttering, she drew the poker from the fire.

And now, even before the red-hot steel touched his cheek-bone, John Markham struggled, struggled like a roped ox against the gag and the straps. But Marie's sister only laughed—laughed as she twitched the poker from the sizzling skin and thrust it back into the coals.

"*Monsieur le capitaine* was clevaire." She laughed. "So clevaire! When he grew rich, he changed his name. He called himself 'Monsieur Markham,' and came home to spend his money. But Marie's sister was more clevaire, much more clevaire. She knew that when *le capitaine* had stolen all he needed, he would go home—to London. So she said to her man: 'Let us, too, go to London. Let us wait for him there.' And they waited for him. Seven—ten—fifteen years Marie's sister and her man waited for *monsieur le capitaine*.

"For always, always"—once more she fidgeted the poker among the coals—"when the English have stolen all that they need, they go back to London. For—is eet not so, *capitaine?*—there is comfort in London. Such comfort! Such homes! Such servants! Servants who are so clevaire,

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so discreet, so obedient—servants who get up when they are told, who go to bed when they are told.

"Yet"—now drawing the poker white-hot from the fire, her eyes were fiend's eyes boring into the eyes of a baited fiend—"yet those servants do not always go to bed when they are told, *capitaine*. Sometimes they wait up. Sometimes they hear the leetle girls crying at the leetle supper-parties. As my sister Marie cried, *capitaine*. And as my father cried when he knew the thing you had done to my sister Marie.

"Do not struggle, *capitaine*. Do not struggle. I shall not hurt you. Oh, no; I sholl not hurt you— Not very much. See! I do but touch you—just touch you—once—twice. On the other cheek—so!"

But even before his left cheek sizzled black to the poker-tip, Markham's bodily struggles had ceased. Only his jowl twitched—twitched and twitched as the stroke paralyzed him.

BLINDLY, as one groping his way through curtain after black curtain of nightmare, the man who had called himself John Markham struggled back to consciousness.

Supine among clean sheets, he opened his eyes to perceive the dark-red gleam of his bow-fronted wardrobe. He was safe, then. Safe and in his own bedroom! A great flood of relief surged through his mind.

Two men stood talking by the wardrobe. His eyes found it difficult to focus on them, but their voices sounded clear enough. One of them—he knew—was St. Clair Hilary, the other a stranger.

"They told me," said the stranger, "that he'd given them the afternoon off. Apparently he had the fit just before they got back. He seems to have been making up the fire, and to have fallen forward onto it. There's a burn on each cheek. *They'll* heal soon enough."

"Poor chap!" answered the second voice—Hilary's. "He wasn't a bad sort. A bit of a bounder, you know, but he had his points. How long will he last, d'you think?"

"That's just the trouble." The stranger's tone dropped, but Markham could still hear every word plainly. "Possibly he'll only last three months. On the other hand, he may last for twelve. If he does, who's to look after him? I ask, because, one way and another, he'll take a good deal of looking-after. It's hardly likely, of course, that he'll ever speak again, at least not intelligibly. But we ought to be able to get him up. When we do, somebody'll have to be with him all the time."

Followed silence; then the stranger went on:

"It's hardly a nurse's job, keeping paralytics from falling into the fire. I've been thinking that perhaps these servants—they seem very devoted to him—might be induced to stop on. It'd be cheaper, too."

"That's a good scheme, Doctor"—Hilary's voice again. "I'm certain the poor chap wouldn't like strangers; and these Gosses are treasures, absolute treasures. I'm sure if you just tell them what you want done——"

Followed another silence—a silence that seemed to burn Markham between the sheets. So he wasn't safe! He was still in danger—in danger of the torture! He wanted to cry out, to tell Hilary he must have a nurse. But though he struggled, struggled till his sight blurred and he felt himself dropping back through the nightmare curtains into utter darkness, not a word came through his teeth.

"Shall I ring for 'em, Doctor; or will it disturb him?"

"Ring away. *He* can't hear anything.

Sightless, almost unconscious, Markham yet knew that "my man" was in the room, that "my man" was speaking.

"But, of course, sir," "my man" was saying, "of course. The wife and I wouldn't dream of leaving the master. Especially not now, sir. You can trust him to us, sir. Entirely to us. He's been a good master. The wife and I'll look after him."

Once more, desperately, despairingly, the man who had called himself John Markham struggled for consciousness. But when he opened his eyes again, Hilary and the doctor had gone.

They had tidied the room for the evening. The reading-lamp was alight at his bedside. The velvet curtains had been drawn across both windows. Coals glowed in the open fireplace. He prayed that he might die swiftly.

Everybody's Magazine, March, 1923

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The Fool

A Moving Story, in Play-Form, of a Man Who Tried to Follow the Teachings of Christ—One of the Most Discussed Productions of the New York Season

By Channing Pollock

Published by courtesy of the author and the producers, the Selwyns

IT IS always hard going for idealists. Most of us yield to expediency when it comes to choice, but there are always a few isolated individuals who cannot numb their moral consciousness to the extent of ignoring the inner promptings which censor their actions. There are so many ways of combining duty and desire and still keeping on fairly good terms with one's soul that most of us take this easy middle way.

But not *Daniel Gilchrist*. He will not compromise with his ideals, and so, one Christmas eve, he finds himself at grips with his world. He is curate of a fashionable New York church, and his fiery championship of Labor has roused the two millionaire wardens to protest. If he persists in his avowed intention of making his Christmas sermon a message of sympathy to the strikers, he must go, they tell the rector.

Dr. Wadham is a pleasant, plausible old man who has experienced very little discomfort, and he sees no reason for preaching uncomfortable doctrines.

He finds *Daniel* in the church and issues the warning.

DR. WADHAM: Daniel, you're in trouble.

DANIEL (*smiling*): Doctor, I'm used to it.

DR. WADHAM: This time it's serious. I've warned you often. I don't see how you can have been so blind. When you're as old as I am, Daniel, you'll understand that being honest doesn't necessarily mean being disagreeable.

DANIEL: Doesn't it mean—telling the truth?

DR. WADHAM: Do you know the truth, Daniel?

DANIEL: Yes; don't you? Doesn't every man—in his heart? And if we want to keep it in our hearts and never think about it or look it in the face, shouldn't some one, pray, open the door and cry, "Behold!" I didn't tell them anything they didn't know, Doctor. I don't *know* anything they don't know. I just reminded them——

DR. WADHAM (*exploding on the last word*): That we were heathen!

DANIEL: That we were Christians, and every man our brother, and that we were sitting, overdressed and overfed, in a Christian church while our brother froze and starved—outside—in a Christian world!

DR. WADHAM: That isn't fair! These good people have given——

DANIEL: *Given*—what cost them nothing! That's how all of us give—what we don't need. What we don't even want! You're a good man, Doctor, and, honestly, what would you say to-morrow if your wife told you she'd sold her rings and given the money to the poor?

DR. WADHAM: Why, I——

DANIEL: You'd say she was crazy.

DR. WADHAM: There's no necessity——

DANIEL: Oh, yes, there is! There'll be people lying in the parks to-night. What would Mrs. Tice say if I invited them to sleep in her pew?

DR. WADHAM: That there's no reason why she should share dirt and disease.

DANIEL: Exactly! We may believe in the brotherhood of Man, but we *know* about

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Photograph by White Studio.

Channing Pollock has been an attaché of the theatre for twenty-two years as press-representative, dramatic critic and playwright. His broad sympathies and the variety of his output may be traced to his interesting parentage and his heterogeneous education. His father was a Hungarian Jew who became an Indian-fighter, newspaper editor and American consul. His mother was a Virginian. The author of "The Fool" received his schooling in the United States, in Prague and in the West Indies. Justifiable insurgency ended it abruptly, and then his education began in newspaper offices and the theatre. Among his well-remembered plays are "Such a Little Queen" and "The Sign on the Door." "The Fool" is the play that Channing Pollock had to write, and because of the preachment it contains, it was years finding a producer. It is his happy experience to have written with serious purpose and to have met with great popular approval.

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germs. We're not sure what is the truth, but there's one thing we *are* sure of, and *mean* to be sure of, and that's our own comfort. You know that, and I know it, and they know it—but we mustn't say it. All right; in God's name, what *are* we to say?"

DR. WADHAM: Precisely. And that brings us to to-morrow's sermon. I understand you intend to talk about the strike. And that's not a very pleasant subject for Christmas. Wouldn't it be more fitting to preach from the text: "Glory to God in the highest"?

DANIEL: "And on earth peace, good will toward men."

DR. WADHAM (*delighted*): Yes! You might say, "There are many kinds of peace——"

DANIEL: But there aren't! There *is* no peace! There is only fear—and hate—and vanity—and lust and envy and greed—of men and nations. There are only people preying on one another, and a hungry horde at the very doors of your church. My text will be: "And Peter followed afar off."

DR. WADHAM: I don't understand.

DANIEL (*into his tone, hitherto indignantly human, comes something mystic—something divine*): We all follow—afar off.

DR. WADHAM: Follow whom?"

DANIEL: Christ.

DR. WADHAM (*alarmed, not at the words, but at that something divine*): Daniel—my dear fellow!

DANIEL: Don't worry. I'm quite sane. Only—I've been wondering about that for a long time. What would happen if anybody really tried to live like Christ?

DR. WADHAM (*shaking his head*): It can't be done.

DANIEL: Isn't it worth trying? Men risk their lives—every day—in experiments far less worth while. We've had centuries of fear and hate and greed—and where have they brought us? Why not try love?

DR. WADHAM: How can you make them try?

DANIEL: By showing that it would work.

DR. WADHAM: It won't work, Daniel. It's a beautiful ideal, but it won't work. Times have changed and things are different. Life isn't as simple as it was two thousand years ago. The trouble with you, Daniel, is that you're not practical."

DANIEL: I wonder.

DR. WADHAM: And the great need of the church is practical men. We mustn't take the Scriptures too literally. We must try to interpret their spirit. And, above all, we must please our congregations or we sha'n't have any. And then what becomes of our influence? Better fall back on my text for to-morrow, Daniel.

DANIEL: I can't.

DR. WADHAM: At least you must promise not to discuss the strike.

DANIEL: I can't do that, Doctor.

DR. WADHAM: Very well. Preach your Christmas sermon, and afterward——

DANIEL: Yes?

DR. WADHAM: I think you may find a greater field of usefulness elsewhere.

The same stroke loses him not only his church but the woman he loves, for *Clare Jewett*, his *fiancée*, breaks their engagement when she learns of the stand he has taken. She might not have been so hasty had she not heard only this afternoon that Dan has been giving away large amounts of money from his private fortune. She had been unsure of her feeling for him for some time, and she decides that she cannot face a future of probable poverty with this man—a little mad, perhaps—whose ideals run amuck.

Daniel is standing before the altar in desolation of spirit when a mysterious stranger appears and reminds him that what seems failure is in reality success. His faith momentarily shaken, *Daniel* asks,

"What good can one man do?"

"Why don't you try?" replies the man.

DANIEL: The Master tried, and they crucified Him!

POOR MAN: Did they? And if they did, what does that matter? Is a man dead whose ideal lives? "Ye crucified me but I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world!"

DANIEL: In God's name, who are you?

POOR MAN: I am a Jew.

TEN months later *Daniel* is serving as strike-arbitrator between *Mr. Goodkind*, senior and his West Virginia miners. *Goodkind* took him on partly for friendly reasons, more especially because he had the acumen to recognize that applied Christianity is sometimes good business.

Clare Jewett married *Jerry Goodkind* shortly after the break with *Daniel*. *Jerry* was always a profligate, and marriage has

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Photographs by White Studio

"THE FOOL" is a play about a man who clings to his ideals—and wins out. Above, this man, *Daniel Gilchrist* (James Kirkwood), a clergyman who gives up his curacy and the woman he loves to carry out his ideas, is talking to *Mary Margaret* (Sara Sothern), a little cripple, who is afterward cured by faith. At the right is *Jerry Goodkind* (Roy Gordon), the profligate son of a coal baron.

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not changed him. He feels that his generosity to *Clare* quite makes up for his lapses from fidelity, and he cannot understand why she should take exception to them.

Clare sees *Daniel* for the first time since her marriage when he comes to the *Goodkind* home to get her father-in-law's signature to an agreement for wage-adjustment he has just drawn up. She is a little piqued to find him so happy.

CLARE: You don't really seem to have lost anything by giving up your church.

DANIEL: No. Queer as it seems, sometimes I think I've gained—in opportunity.

CLARE: (*chiefly to herself*): Perhaps one *might* have eaten one's cake, and had it, too.

DANIEL: Clare, why open wounds that are beginning to heal?

CLARE: Yours seem quite healed. Are you—honestly—happy?

DANIEL: Honestly.

CLARE: In just helping others?

DANIEL: In just helping others.

CLARE: I don't understand that.

DANIEL: You will—some day—and so will all the world.

Daniel's new plan calls for a radical wage-adjustment and also for representation of the miners on the Board of Directors. He had come to *Goodkind* with high hopes that he would sign it in recognition of his success in keeping the men contented for almost a year. But *Goodkind* and his associates refuse flatly to grant these new demands. Two forces are operating against *Daniel* which he cannot control. One is a man on the miners' committee who has been paid to betray his friends and obstruct *Daniel;* another is a false accusation that has been made. He has been accused of a *liaison* with the wife of one of the miners on the committee. He cannot defend himself without betraying the real culprit—*Jerry Goodkind*. Since this will only add to *Clare's* unhappiness, he keeps silent. Again he loses out materially through adherence to his principles.

Daniel goes next to the slums and establishes a settlement-house for down-and-outers, which the recipients of his benevolence have jovially named "Overcoat Hall." He is guide, philosopher, friend and, too often for his waning balance, banker to the neighborhood. The one object of his charity who cares more for him than she does for herself is *Mary Margaret*, a little cripple.

DANIEL (*sitting at table*): Supper with Cinderella.

MARY MARGARET (*setting dish before him*): Gee! I love that story! (*She sits beside him.*) When you tell it to me, you make me believe I'm her.

DANIEL: If you believe it—you *are*.

MARY MARGARET: I guess believin' ain't never goin' to make *me* dance.

DANIEL: You can't tell—if you believe hard enough.

MARY MARGARET: That's what you said before, and I've tried, but, somehow, it don't work.

DANIEL: That's the very time to go on. If we stop, just because it doesn't work, that isn't faith.

MARY MARGARET: No; I suppose not.

DANIEL: And faith moves mountains. Once upon a time there was a woman who'd been sick twelve years. But there was a Man in that city who said He could even make the dead rise. And everybody laughed at Him—as they would to-day. But the woman didn't laugh, and one morning, when He was passing her house, she got up and followed Him—just to touch the hem of His cloak. And what do you think? She was cured. And the Man said——

MARY MARGARET: I know. "Thy faith hath made thee whole." Could God do that for me?

DANIEL: Yes.

MARY MARGARET: It would be an awful big favor.

DANIEL: But if He doesn't, you must go on. If faith doesn't heal our hurts, it helps us to bear them. And that's almost the same thing, isn't it?

MARY MARGARET (*doubtfully*): Yes.

DANIEL: Like believing you're Cinderella.

MARY MARGARET: Yes.

DANIEL: We can't decide what we want and then be angry and doubtful because it doesn't happen our way. Because all the time it's happening His way. The only thing we can be sure of is that He knows what's best.

MARY MARGARET: That's right. You mean, if God wants me to be well, some day He'll make me well?

DANIEL: If you believe hard enough.

MARY MARGARET: And if He don't?

DANIEL: Then *that's* right—if you believe hard enough.

Daniel is not free from the temptations of

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the flesh in his new life. *Clare* now repents deeply of her choice. *Jerry's* excesses and neglect are making her life increasingly difficult, and sometimes she comes to Overcoat Hall for consolation. She would leave *Jerry* at a word from *Daniel*, but he sends her back where her duty lies.

Her visits have caused comment among his enemies. So also have the visits of *Pearl Hennig*, the wife of *Joe Hennig*, of the miners' committee, with whom his name was linked before. She got into difficulties through her affair with *Jerry* and came to *Daniel* for help. Her husband, who has always believed that *Daniel* is her lover, musters a gang and goes to the settlement-house to punish him. *Pearl* defends him from their accusations.

PEARL: Ain't you heard? I lied to him, an' he's give me another chance, an' *I'm gonna take it!* He ain't no man. He's a saint! I tell you he's like God!

A VOICE: Where's his wings? (*All laugh.*)

JOE: Like God!

ANOTHER VOICE: That's blasphemy.

JOE: That's what it is, an' that's what he's been in tellin' 'em! Ain't it—you—Grubby? Didn't he tell you that? Didn't he tell you that he was a son of God?

THE GANG: Sure he did! That's right!

JOE: You see—that's what he's told 'em all. That's how he gets 'em. (*To Daniel.*) Didn't you tell 'em you was a son of God?

DANIEL: I am!

THE GANG: He admits it!

A GIRL: And I'm Mary Magdalene.

THE GANG: Pipe Mary Magdalene! Son of God!

DANIEL: So are we all! (*Jeers.*) In you—and me—and all of us—deep down—is something of Him! We may try to hide it. (*Jeers.*) Or kill it. But, in spite of ourselves, we *are* divine!

THE GANG: Chuck it! Hell! Cut the gab! He's crazy! Come on; smash the place!

A MINER (*facing Daniel*): If you're a son of God—save yourself! If you're—what you say—give us a sign.

JOE: Oh, hell! Come on!

At *Joe's* cry, the men crowd toward *Daniel*, some of the picking up chairs and benches as they come. His friends who are present fight back the gang, but in the struggle which ensues, *Daniel* is hurt and falls unconscious to the floor. *Mary Margaret*, almost frenzied at the attack on her friend, prays aloud for help. She is at one side of the room with *Miss Levinson*, a woman of the neighborhood. As *Daniel* falls, *Mary Margaret* raises herself to her feet by gripping a chair and, without her crutches, starts across the room to him.

MISS LEVINSON: Mary Margaret, where are your crutches?

MARY MARGARET (*looking at her legs in tearful bewilderment*): I don't know! I kin walk! I kin walk! (*Seeing, and running up to Daniel.*) Mr. Gilchrist! Oh, Mr. Gilchrist! (*She folds him in her arms.*)

PEARL: I told you! I told you he was a saint!

A MINER: You wanted a sign—*look!* (*His voice drops to a tone of hushed awe.*) Down on your knees—you damned murderers! God's in this room. Down on your knees!

One by one and two by two the awestruck mob obeys. *Joe* is lying senseless, but his cohorts, crossing themselves, have seen a miracle.

DANIEL wins through to peace at last. It is Christmas eve once more; he is in his study in the settlement-house. It is lined with books and gay with Christmas decorations. *Mary Margaret* is bustling about, and presently *Mr. Goodkind* comes to make *Daniel* an offer. His system has failed, and he is willing that *Daniel* should have his way.

GOODKIND: How are things with you?

DANIEL (*enthusiastically*): Fine!

GOODKIND: Happy?

DANIEL (*radiantly*): Yes! And you?

GOODKIND: No. Everything's all wrong. My boy's very ill. Clare's wonderful to him. I can't explain it—she's like a different woman. And *she* seems happy. But Jerry's had to give up work, and there's more trouble in Black River, and that's what brought me.

DANIEL: You don't want *my* advice?

GOODKIND: I want *you*—as general manager. These strikes are such utter damned waste. We had a working compromise on your agreement, and everything was all right, but we began figuring we could make more money—and the men walked out and flooded the mines. I'd like you to take charge, Daniel.

DANIEL: I can't.

Everybody's Magazine, March, 1923

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GOODKIND: Name your own salary.

DANIEL: My work is here.

GOODKIND: You can have anything you want.

DANIEL: I don't want anything.

GOODKIND: You're not going to turn down a hundred thousand a year?

DANIEL: What can I buy with it that I haven't got?

GOODKIND: What can you buy with a hundred——

DANIEL: What have *you* bought?

GOODKIND: I've got one of the finest houses in New York.

DANIEL: Is it any more comfortable than this?

GOODKIND: This one little room?

DANIEL: How many rooms do you live in at the same time?

GOODKIND: I've got half a dozen cars.

DANIEL: I've two legs, and I walk and keep well.

GOODKIND: I've twenty servants——

DANIEL: Don't tell me you enjoy that!

GOODKIND: And the respect of people about me——

DANIEL: So have I.

GOODKIND: And what's most important of all, I'm a success.

DANIEL: Are you? What is success? Money? Yes; that is what our civilization tells us. But where has that brought us? All round us we see men of wealth who have nothing else—neither health nor happiness nor love nor respect. Men who can get no joy out of books or pictures or music or even themselves. Tired, worried men, who are afraid to quit because they have no resource except to make money—money with which to buy vulgar excitement for their own debased souls. Why, Mr. Goodkind, I have an income that you wouldn't suggest to your bookkeeper. But I have peace and health and friends, and time to read and think and dream and help. Which of us is the rich man?

GOODKIND: I'm afraid there wouldn't be much progress—living your way.

DANIEL: It isn't *my* way. It's the sum total of all that has been learned and taught. You and Jerry and the others have called me eccentric and a fool because I'm trying to walk a path trod hard by countless feet. Was Christ eccentric? Was Confucius a fool? And how about Buddha and Mohammed? What of St. Bernard and St. Theresa and St. Francis of Assisi—of Plato, and Zeno and Lincoln and Emerson and Florence Nightingale and Father Damien and Octavia Hill and all the saints and scientists and poets and philosophers who have lived and died in complete forgetfulness of self? Were they fools, or were they wise men and women who had found the way to peace and happiness? Were they failures, or were they the great successes of all time and eternity?

GOODKIND: God knows!

Jerry, who has grown impatient of waiting in the car for his father, now comes to *Daniel's* room. He is partially paralyzed, paying the price for his years of debauchery.

JERRY: Hello, Gilchrist!

DANIEL: How are you, Jerry?

JERRY: Not so damned well. But I'll be all right in the spring. Clare's looking after me. Clare's a good sport. What I need now's a run down to Palm Beach. (*Looks around.*) So you're reduced to this, are you?

DANIEL: Yes.

JERRY: Going to take my job?

DANIEL: No.

JERRY: Why not?

DANIEL: Your father understands.

JERRY: Yes—so do I. Didn't I always say you were a nut? That's it—a nut! (*He laughs with a laugh that begins to get the better of him.*)

GOODKIND (*going rapidly to the door*): Come, Jerry!

JERRY: Aw'right! Some failure you've made out of life! (*Turns back, and leers at Mary Margaret. In the doorway, looks at Dan.*) Wheels—by God! Wheels! (*He laughs, and goes out.*)

GOODKIND (*goes to Dan, and takes his hand*): I wonder if *you're* the failure after all. Good-night!

The chimes in the distance begin to play a Christmas hymn. *Daniel* opens the windows, and he and *Mary Margaret* stand looking out over the chimney-pots at the blue night sky where a single bright star shines.

MARY MARGARET: Mr. Gilchrist, is that the Star of Bethlehem?

DANIEL: I wonder——

The chimes swell out as the curtain falls.

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The Prince of the Taxi

A Novel Complete in This Issue

Set in One of Those Small, Out-of-the-Way Countries Where the Plotting of the "Outs" to Oust the "Ins" Is Continuous — Countries Productive of Adventure, Revolution and Great Fun — That Is, to the Onlooker

By Ferdinand Reyher

Illustrations by J. M. Clement

YOU know, or have heard of, or have, consciously or unconsciously, come into contact with P. W. Brill & Co., exporters. Under that brief, noncommittal title is woven a mesh of some seventy subsidiary corporations from a garden-rake company in Maine to a street railway in Buenos Aires, maritime interests of both ship-building and navigating varieties which lap the globe round as sufficiently as a sombrero covers the head of a Mexican, and banks and banking affiliations in every city touching the seven seas and most of the big rivers pouring therein.

Backing away for a full block from a block frontage on Hancock Square, a few hundred yards from Wall and Broad Streets, the home office of P. W. Brill & Co. is one of the mercantile sights of Manhattan.

If ever there is anything in this world which gives the impression of sober reliability, it is this building and all in it. You could as soon have imagined an intoxicated man wandering about within its office sanctuaries as you could of raising a hundred-thousand-dollar loan on the security of a hundred feet of garden-hose from Mr. Kenyon, the stout man with the slightly bulging eyes who usually occupied the office of assistant manager of the South and Central-American Department on the fourth floor, but was now closeted with the chief of the department in the latter's office.

Russell Clark Carte got out of the rear elevator at the fourth floor with a slightly unsteady forcefulness and wended his way with exaggerated care toward the front of the building and the offices of the South and Central-American Department. He stood uncertainly for a moment on the threshold of a large room one-half of which was filled with evenly aligned typewriter-desks and typists, the other half with broader double desks, at both sides of which young men and women were busy with maps, ledgers, documents of one sort and another. His eyes, shifting vaguely, managed to focus themselves upon the door of the widest private office, at the other end of the room.

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A young lady with a clear olive-complexioned face and braided-down black hair framing it into an oval as perfect as the olive's came out of this office bearing papers. Her glance, casually roving over the big room, rested disinterestedly on the figure of Carte for a moment; then she turned and walked to a man sitting with his back to her at one of the double desks.

CARTE sauntered with a hardly perceptible lurch down the center aisle and entered the door through which the girl had come. Through his mind passed an inebriated chant:

"No stam'na! No capacity 't all! Bum head! Yo ho! Three lil' glasses an' I'm in the brine! Don' bury me 't all! Three lil' glasses!"

Just as he came through the door into what was a small anteroom, his eyes lightened. Jim Conover, a sheaf of papers in his hand, was about to go out.

"Jim," requested Carte thickly, "sthell me, asha scholar an' gen'men! I wash a warrior bold an' onesh I c'd lif' the horn o' Thor—or wash it Triton?—anyway, it wash some horn—an' drain a sea of powerful liquor—jes' like that, Jim—an' now three lil' pink drinks— Wash matter?"

The other was regarding him with unsimulated horror.

"Good Lord, Russ! You're drunk!"

"In the brine," agreed the other solemnly.

"Man alive, let me get you out of here! Kenyon's in there with the old man——"

"The hell yeh say!" The drunken man attempted to straighten himself. "Thash man I wanna see."

He pushed past Conover and into the closed office beyond, on the door of which was recorded: "James W. Farrell." His entrance was so abrupt that the two men in the room rose from their chairs. Carte swayed uncertainly into position to face the stouter of the two, whose expression had already changed from mere startled surprise to an apopleptic amazement.

"Shay, guy!" Carte, having established something approaching equilibrium, gravely poked a finger into the tender middle of the fat man. "You—you Kenyon guy, I mean—I'm gone take a fall outta you. You're fat—but thash won' save you. Some fall! I gosh your num'er. When you wash a jungle-runner for my ole man—" Carte stopped, and a look of drunken craftiness came into his eyes. "Fat men!" he snorted. "Me'n Cæsar don' pair on 'em 't all," he decided deliberately. "Gimme skinny guys ev'ry time," he declared, extending one hand toward the third man, upon whose well-preserved, rather stern face inarticulate incredulity was rampant. "Misher Farrell," continued Carte, with no hard feelings, "you and my ole man never paired right; but you wash square in your convicshuns, an' ev'ry man'sh opinions ish his castle. But, Misher Farrell, you wash out for Fatty here, or he'll do you like he did my father!"

"Damn it—this is outrageous! You—you swine——"

"One minute please, Kenyon!" barked Farrell, speech returning to him under high pressure. He pressed a button on his desk. A moment later a young man, a half-head taller than Carte and twenty pounds heavier, with the composite physique of a full-back, a polo-player and a pugilist, entered.

"Mr. Heath," said Farrell, with a kind of white-hot quietness, "please escort this person into some corner of the building where a door may be securely shut upon him indefinitely. Thank you."

He made as though to turn to his desk after the disposal of some trifling irritation, when he was roughly yanked out of his hardly won self-possession again. A whoop that was something between a yell and a screech of a medicine-man in a voodoo ceremony ripped through the decorous stretches of P. W. Brill & Co. It came from Carte. His face was wreathed with creases of cherubic joy.

"C'mon, Charlie!" he chortled. "C'mon, kid! You poor, good-lookin' fish, c'mon!"

Mr. Farrell approached hysterics.

"Take him out!" he shouted.

"Misher Farrell," answered Carte sadly, "he looks good, Charlie dosh. Nice boy, Misher Farrell, but he ishn't in my class 't all, Misher Farrell. He'd get hurt."

"Russ—Mr. Carte," hastily agreed Mr. Heath, "packs—I mean he has a very nasty punch, Mr. Farrell. I—I have boxed with Mr. Carte in the gymnasium. Now, anything in the ordinary course of duty, Mr. Farrell——"

"Get him out!" roared Mr. Farrell.

"Wait a minute!" counterordered Carte. "I'll fix you up, Misher Farrell," he suggested. "Don' gesh sore at Charlie. I'll

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take him in wish Fatty there." And he indicated Kenyon. "Make goo' scrap f'r yeh, Misher Farrell—eh?"

Mr. Farrell abruptly reached over, gripped both Carte's wiry shoulders and proceeded to twist him doorward. But he did not proceed far. Carte twisted with that spasmodic agility drunken persons at times can command, stumbled sideways out of Mr. Farrell's clutch, crashed against the bulk of Kenyon, knocking out of that gentleman's hand a well-stuffed and open portfolio with calamitous effect, and caromed against Mr. Farrell's big desk. In attempting to right himself, he swept a pile of papers from the top of it to the floor. He righted himself, knelt down and began to scoop up the litter on the floor, slapping it in clumsily grabbed lots upon the desk. Mr. Farrell, purple with rage, frantically jabbed at the end button of the electric board on his desk. Kenyon futilely beat at the kneeling drunkard's humped shoulders and yelled:

"Don't touch 'em! Get out o' here! Keep your hands off 'em!"

He plumped down on his knees before Carte, frantically scraping the papers together out of the reach of the other. Carte pounced sportively on his knees against the fat man.

"Woof! Woof!" he said.

The next moment, before Kenyon could reply in the proper spirit of the game, and before Mr. Farrell had yet won any results from his unceasing attack on the bell, Carte had effected a standing posture.

"'S all right, Misher Farrell; no hard feelinsh," he assured the distraught old man. "Ah'm on mah way! By-by, Fatty!" he said playfully, and gave the fat man, who was still kneeling on the floor, a friendly shove.

Mr. Kenyon toppled grotesquely against the desk with a murderous gurgle and rolled on his back, flourishing a wad of papers over himself like a white flag.

The next moment Carte was careening gaily on his fantastic way through the aisle, between two fields of pop-eyed stenographers and clerks, toward the elevator from whence he had originally sprung.

MR. RUSSELL CLARKE CARTE zigzagged upon a taxi-driver, lost in somnolent meditations pleasant beside his machine, about a block round the corner from the side entrance to P. W. Brill & Co. Mr. Carte lifted his hands above his head with a motion that seemed part benediction. To the casual observer—there is always one, and there was a particular one now—it was apparent that, to Carte, the taxi was revolving dizzily round its meter.

He ceased his salutations to the machine and directed them in still more genial manner upon the chauffeur.

"How're you?" he asked politely.

The driver regarded him with a blending of amazement and admiration.

"How d'ye git that way?" he marveled.

"Ish a gift," conceded Carte. He laid his hand familiarly upon the man's shoulder. "I wanna go to the lil' red house—the lil' red house on the hill," he ordered, with a wink. "Sssget me?"

"Sure—sure!" said the other, winking back.

"Ri'way. We're pals—eh?" They shook hands seriously. "Grea' lil' pals! I'm go'n' sit wi' my lil' pal i' front—wha' shay?"

Saying this, Carte turned slightly and rubbed his shoulder affectionately against the other's chest, and in so doing opened his coat slightly and pulled a little flask partly clear of his inside pocket, revealing four or five inches of a reddishly golden liquid.

"Brother," said the taxi-driver reverently, assisting Carte into the seat beside the wheel, "ye can sit on the roof if ye wanna!"

It was as Carte climbed up that he saw the particular casual observer of his anachronistic antics.

She was dark and slender. Even then, he could appreciate her as a symphony of fascinating darkness and alluring slenderness from the stiff, dark sailor to the thin, sharp ties, setting off her delicately slender, black-sheathed ankles. Her big, luminous black eyes held his for a second. Somewhere, sometime, he had seen them before, and as plainly as day they said that somewhere, sometime, they, too, had seen him before.

No time to dally. Carte reversed himself, backed violently into the driver and spun to the pavement. He looked up and blinked. The girl had disappeared. Whence she had come, whither she had gone were equal mysteries. She had been standing in front of a boarded-up door of a brown, dirt-encrusted warehouse of the style of 1872

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and the hope of an American merchant marine.

"Hula, hula, hoo!" ejaculated Carte. "Now, wha' would she wanna go in there for if she could, whish she couldn't; she muss be in shat hot-tamale joint there—" He carefully pointed out for himself a small, odoriferous Spanish restaurant forty or fifty feet farther on, whose single, moderately broad window had inscribed in an arc of white rounded letters upon it:

RISTORANTE VICTORIANO CABRERA

"Shtay shtill minute, old top!" Carte requested the establishment. "Can' fool me. I c'n walk ri' to you."

He walked solemnly upon the restaurant of Victoriano Cabrera, with his hands held out to catch it should it attempt to dodge past him. He entered it. It was empty of all save a little fat man with a mane of black hair and a fly on the end of his nose, dozing on a high chair against the wall.

Carte approached him on swaying tiptoes and leaned over the counter.

"Whisht!" he said, and swatted the fly.

The little fat man came suddenly to with a funny puffing sound.

"*Dios!*" he ejaculated.

"Fly," answered Carte, making a two-fingered motion of fastly flitting wings.

"*Sacro Cristo!*" exploded the little man.

"On the end of your nose," Carte explained. "There—ri' there!" And he poked an index-finger in friendly illustrative fashion at the point of the other's nose.

"Whoahoo!" whooped Victoriano.

"Who am I? I am the Prince of the Taxicab, and I wash lookin' f'r beaut'ful *señorita* wash walks in glory like the night in Panama. Heap swell girl! Un'ersthand?"

"No drinks served here!" said Victoriano.

"If you fine 'er, lesh me know ash this 'dress." And Carte pulled forth from behind the flask in his inside pocket a long, bulging envelope that had been addressed to him, and opened and laid it on the glass case.

"Don' bothsher 'closin' postage," he said, and, turning himself gravely about, wandered out into the street again.

He scratched his head and again gave that quick look up and down which, in the first place, had told him that the strange, beautiful girl—whom he had seen somewhere before—had vanished. He abruptly stepped back to the taxi with the alacrity of one departing from haunted regions.

"Take me home, Oliver," he ordered. "I know she wasn' there. She wassa dream—tha's all. Lesh us away, trusty henchman!" And he was on the seat before the driver could aid him. The next moment, however, he had restored the festive note, and burst into song.

"I looked an' she wash there;
I looked an' she wash not.
But whesher she wash there or not
Ish someshin' I fergot."

"Le's go, Oliver! Drive on, mad wight!"

And as the machine started with a jerk, Carte was merrily tilted backward and his feet kicked out across the leveled windshield, which automatically brought up his left hand, raising with it the little flask for all men—that is, for whatever casual passer-by there might be—to see. And in the last moments of this out-dated scene there was still one other particular observer who missed no detail of it.

THE second casual observer was an extraordinarily tall, thin and strikingly florid man. In fact, he was so tall and so ruddy that he looked like a lamp-post casting its beam athwart a naughty world, and through the glow of his own lighted-up but not particularly prepossessing countenance flickered two eyes so pale blue that they were almost white. After a protracted examination of him, it came to one with distinct surprise that he was exceedingly well dressed. He had neither the physiognomy nor physique that sets off clothes. He would actually have looked better, if for no other reason than artistic appropriateness, in a battered, ventilated felt hat than in the smart new Leghorn pulled down on his forehead, and in a pair of well-patched or not so well-patched pants than in the finely creased, unfinished-worsted trousers he had on. His clothes fitted him stunningly, but he didn't fit them. Yet there was no evidence of undue worriment over this fact on his fiery face as he peered through the window of a little cigar store across the street, which he had hastily entered when he first caught sight of Carte, which was just as that inebriated gentleman stood beside the taxi for the second time and instructed the driver to take him away from there.

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The intent glance which the elongated florid gentleman kept on Carte and the departing automobile, until he could no longer see it through the window, had that peculiar comprehensiveness acquired by certain individuals who never know when certain utterly trivial facts may become utterly important ones. It enabled him, almost unconsciously, to note exactly Carte's condition, Carte's companion, Carte's little flourish of the little brown flask and the license-number of the taxi.

He issued forth from the store and stood for a moment, thoughtfully regarding the corner round which the taxi had swerved, and rubbed one side of his ruby nose with a long finger.

"Hm. How do they do it?" ruminated the florid man, with a touch of envy. "Weird at that, eh?" queried his philosophical self of himself. "For pretty near fifty years his old man ran the jungle, knocked about in the damnedest drink-requiring ports in the devil's lot, played revolutions like another guy'd play poker and got next to more temptation than St. Anthony, and at that stayed clear of the booze and the rest all the way through! And now, there's his kid —up here—in the Garden o' the White Man's Gods, running wild with the stuff, when there ain't even supposed to be any." A slow, satiric smile twitched at the corners of his mouth. "Hm. Kenyon'll be tickled to get the know on this, if he ain't already." He chuckled.

"I'M COMING right out to see you," said Mr. Kenyon excitedly over the telephone the moment he learned who the man who called him was and that he had seen Carte. "At the Exchange Buffet—over on Broad—don't go in—meet me at the door."

"Right!"

The protracted, highly complexioned man was there first. Kenyon gripped his arm and fairly pulled him along with him. He was sizzling with excitement.

"Chaffee, you said you saw Carte?" he exclaimed.

"Yeah."

"Was he drunk?"

The tall man tugged himself to a standstill against the other's propelling hold on his arm.

"Drunk? He was eight fathoms under, and then some!"

"Was he really—soused—absolutely?" persisted Kenyon, pushing still closer to the lean man, almost hissing his words.

"Great Moses! I'll say he was drunk!" exploded Chaffee. With painstaking sarcasm he described his encounter from the distance with Carte. "What's the idee in this here inquest?" he concluded.

"This is the idea," Kenyon said vehemently: "A while ago—not more than half an hour ago—Carte broke in drunk on Farrell and me as I was going over the thing I've been waiting and working for for twenty years to put up to P. W. Brill, the thing that can give me more power and wealth than any tin-head ruler of Vengentina ever had or will have, or all that old man Carte ever passed up. A proposition that P. W. Brill couldn't get away from—had it sewed up tight—the whole damned republic down there in my fingers—and right there in my portfolio—in my own hands, two documents from Juan Carozal, who's going to be president there in a week. One paper signed by two dozen of the biggest bugs in his whole damned republic, offering us everything in the world that Vengentina's got, from customs control and a new tax-schedule down to revised property-owning statutes and trade supervision, all for nothing more than the moral backing of Carozal and recognition by this country after he knocks Estaban de Neyra out of the palace on the Day of Liberation, July twentieth, a week from to-morrow exactly. See? And that paper—see?"

"Yeah—yeah!"

"And that paper, with another paper, a private contract with me, commissioning me to get a certain amount of munitions here for shipment down to them—see?"

"Go on!"

"Which I did. And over on the other side of the river three thousand cases that might be lawn-mowers and cash-registers were put into the hold of the *Skudenshavn*, a Norwegian tramp to-day—but she won't sail till to-morrow—see?"

"And she won't to-morrow with that cargo if the port authorities get wind of it—what?"

"Exactly!" snarled Kenyon.

"Where does Carte come in on this?"

"Here! Two papers—get that? On one of them my share in what's breaking loose down in Vengentina next week and my share

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in getting hold of those rifles for Carozal, all recorded, plain as I am to you—with an agreement signed by Carozal and Vasco Garanullos—" He hesitated.

"Shoot!"

"Signed proper by them, guaranteeing me the Rio Matagalpa tract by a staged state sale of Carte's rights in it that he got from his father, along with ten years' supply of labor at the right figures and full state protection in any project I undertake. And under the record of my completion of the job of getting the rifles into New York without a hitch, I had the signatures of Carozal's agents—see?"

"Well—what happened?"

"Hell's blazes! What happened? Just those two papers—out of more'n a hundred papers of one sort and another I had in my portfolio and on Farrell's desk—my fist on 'em every minute—so hell itself couldn't get one away—were gone when Carte got out!"

Chaffee whistled and tilted his new Leghorn hat back so far that the rim indicated ninety degrees from the top of his sparse, dull hair.

"Wow!" he added.

"Now tell me he was drunk!"

Chaffee told Kenyon nothing.

Kenyon rose abruptly and went to the telephone behind the cashier's counter, beckoning Chaffee after him.

"What kind of taxi was it?"

"Brown and red."

"Number?"

"106222."

"Chaffee—you find that taxi and Carte. Any way you think of. I am going back in here, get a detective agency I can trust on the wire and let them put a few people on the same thing. Call me regularly here—see? This place is safe."

"Yeah," agreed Chaffee slowly. "But listen here, old *camarada*—what do I get out of it?"

Mr. Kenyon swallowed.

"I had intended to let you in big when I first got you to come up here. You know what the Rio Madagalpa tract is. Now—if you're with me, you're in as big as I am. Fifty-fifty."

"Put that little word down in writing—what?" said Mr. Chaffee gently, but with a sharp look.

Again Mr. Kenyon swallowed.

"All right. I'll have it ready for you to-night. Can you trust me that long?" he demanded in a grieved tone.

"Till to-night—yeah," drawled Chaffee imperturbably.

"Call me regularly in the mean time," Kenyon instructed him, ignoring Chaffee's last words.

"Every hour on the hour," said Chaffee, and they parted at the door.

AT TWENTY-NINE minutes after ten that evening, a brown-and-red taxi swerved on two wheels round the corner from Avenue B toward the long-deserted pier that butts out from Nineteenth Street into the East River, from which a mist was rising. Meyer Hearst, patrolman on the beat, was standing at the corner. Startled by the maniacal speed of the machine, which contained two men in the front seat, one of whom was brandishing a flask and singing something, he blew his whistle at it. Already the machine was hurrying over Pier 67. He rushed after it, but now it was lost in the dark mistiness of the pier's end. He heard the screech of brakes. He seemed to see the machine rise in the mist, hold as though suspended in the air for a second and then dive out and into oblivion. Patrolman Hearst scampered across the joining barges to Pier 68, and hailed a tug which was pushing in a scow and blowing its whistles as though it, too, knew all about what had happened and why it was.

Night watchmen and two other patrolmen joined Patrolman Hearst. Life became interesting, vivid, illuminated by lanterns and search-lights, and full of pep along the docks, and the night hummed with desperate industry.

All that rewarded them, however, until five o'clock in the morning, when the brown-and-red taxi, once driven by one of the trustiest of the Brown-and-Red's chauffeurs, was hooked up from the river-bottom empty, was a chauffeur's hat and a flask half filled with whiskey, which one of the patrolmen rapidly insisted upon carrying off to the station-house as important evidence, an empty herring-cask and an envelope addressed to Russell Clark Carte, 110 Gramercy Park, New York.

The story appeared more or less similarly in all the afternoon newspapers, a plump

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epitaph upon the spectacular and ultimate engagement of a wild young man with ecstasy and rum, song, taxi-cabs and the East River.

Russell Clark Carte was born in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras, March 16, 1892. His father, Russell David Carte or old "Go-Carte," as he was known by every white English-speaking man from the Avenida de Mayo to the Paseo de la Reforma, was at the moment idle, being only implicated in three revolutions in Guatemala, New Guatemala and Nicaragua respectively, involved in the impending hostilities between Honduras and Salvador and investigating certain mining possibilities of Costa Rica.

The first three years of his life, Russell Clark Carte spent in Tegucigalpa, Colon and Porto Quyaba, Vengentina. He was then taken by his mother to Havana and Baltimore, to Mrs. Carte's parents, Colonel and Mrs. Alfred W. Clark. At the age of eight, young Carte was again brought to Porto Quyaba, where his father had made what for want of more definitive terms must be called his "permanent residence."

Carte lived in Porto Quyaba until he came to the States to college, attending the University of Colorado School of Mines for two years, and then went to the Wharton School of Finance of the University of Pennsylvania, graduating in 1913. He entered the employ of P. W. Brill & Co., resigning in August, 1914, and enlisted in the famous "Black Watch" Regiment. He served through the war and was three times wounded. At the conclusion of the war, he again entered the employ of P. W. Brill & Co., in which office he remained until two weeks ago.

His father was one of the most famous soldiers of fortune of southern America. He acquired such influence in the affairs of certain nationalities that he was variously known as the "King of Orinoca," the "Prince of Panama," and satirized in a widely known cartoon in *Punch* as "Generalissimo Carto Beforo de Horso."

WHEN Mr. Kenyon returned to his office for a few minutes shortly before five o'clock, he found a note on his desk.

The note was from his secretary, the young lady who had come out of Mr. Farrell's office just as Carte stood on the threshold of his frolicsome assault upon that dignified sanctum. She was a Chilean, and had been Mr. Kenyon's secretary and in the employ of P. W. Brill & Co. for only a matter of five weeks, but in that time had shown the most startling intelligence, willingness and industry. Now her note regretfully informed him that, because of a telephone-call from Cincinnati, she was immediately leaving New York for the West, but would let him know in a few days when she would return.

Mr. Kenyon verified the existence of such a call by the telephone operator and Mr. Farrell himself. The latter had come into Kenyon's office during the conversation with Cincinnati. The girl had been so agitated that he questioned her. Her brother had called her—their mother was dying—Cincinnati and all that—she was off almost at once.

Mr. Kenyon's contact with death worried him nearly as much as though he were personally implicated—that is, the proximity of the strange departure of his secretary with the even stranger departure of those two all-important communications from Vengentina. He endeavored to reach her at her residence, a boarding-house in East Twenty-fifth Street, but she had already been there and departed.

He had another detective coached on the appearance of the young lady and sent to the station, and he himself was there in time for the first Cincinnati express she could have taken. She was not there. He found time to be there again for the ten-five. Nor did she appear then.

At quarter to eleven came Chaffee's call informing him of Carte and the trusty brown-and-red taxi-driver's abrupt cessation of all annoying participation in this world's affairs and the plans of Mr. Kenyon. The news, while it cheered Mr. Kenyon, created a distressful concentration of thought on his part upon his charming assistant, and there entered his mind, and remained there all through the night, a sardonic reflection. A lot of people seemed to have picked that day out to die in! But just as all his pleasure in the complete taking-off of Carte was about to be blanketed under an ever-increasing thickness of pessimism, Fate turned reassuringly to Mr. Kenyon and he beamed with contentment once more.

That evening, the two papers, each caught in the metal clasp binding the other, were found with the aid of a carpenter who was brought into Mr. Farrell's office for the purpose of removing all attached objects in a general yet thorough way. Through the crack at the top of a built-in set of shelves, heavy with blue-prints, atlases, surveys and filing-folders, the documents had slipped. Mr. Kenyon, not too elated over the discovery of the papers to avoid skilfully showing his agreement

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with the opposition party in Vengentina to Mr. Farrell, was nevertheless far too elated to question with any sort of enthusiasm the quaint parabola which the documents must have described in order to slip so pertly through that crack behind the book-shelves.

IN THIS convenient interval let us go back a bit. William Kenyon and Russell David Carte, the father of that exuberant young man whom the emotional metropolitan evening papers were so copiously mourning, had graduated from the same engineering school and had been close friends. In his early days in South America, the elder Carte had been all manner of adventurer from jungle-runner to a kind of idealistic filibuster. A man of strong will, strong intelligence and amazingly strong spirit, he had passed over dangerous days, through devious turnings of endless revolutions, political imbroglios and minor international Donnybrook Fairs. Always respected for his courage, unlike numbers of others from the North, he was absolutely trusted in addition. Had he cared to subscribe to a nominal amount of compromise with his own tough conceptions of fair dealing, he could have made himself wealthy beyond the clutch of the income-tax collector and powerful as a Northern corporation. He died to all intents and purposes a poor man, for the one possession which was the fruit of a chivalrous but volatile life he had not yet brought to the point of yielding returns. This was a tract in northwestern Vengentina, bordering the Rio Madagalpa on both banks for over fifty miles, one of the most wonderful coffee-countries in the world. He had been permitted to take up this tract as payment for services rendered to the first systematic government Vengentina had ever known—services which never could have been paid in excess, as that very government was of his making.

In the foot-hills bordering his plains on the west, he had located mineral deposits, the nature of which was known by but one other man. About this time, Kenyon, from whom he had parted in Ecuador three years before, drifted up out of the Argentine. He insinuated himself into partnership with Carte. For two years they worked together upon the massive problem of connecting the Rio Madagalpa tract with Porto Quyaba and the seacoast; and in that time Kenyon perfected a sweet plot to remove the president whom Carte had put into office. Carte barely escaped with his life, and disappeared somewhere "up river." Nearly a year later, Kenyon got a report from a band of Indians that he had died of fever. Then, one morning, with the son of the ex-president, Carte the indomitable came riding in from the northwest with a handful of soldiers so-called—mountain brigands, river-bandits, jungle-scrappers—a genial, bloodthirsty crew if ever there was one.

They swept Kenyon's figurehead out of office and his whole army before them, and Kenyon escaped as barely with his life as Carte had done previously, fled to Trinidad and abandoned his equity in the great Rio Madagalpa plantation.

It was the irony of Vengentina politics and military history that the disreputable band which Carte had assembled proved to be the most efficient military organization the country had seen.

With its help the new president, de Neyra, maintained himself in office and had continued in the presidency until now.

Estaban de Neyra had lived on the Continent and studied in the United States, was an ardent student of politics and diplomacy, and of scholarly bent. He lived in a large, low white house on the Hill of Palms, two miles outside of Porto Quyaba, overlooking Quyaba Bay from its loveliest point of vantage. Carte's residence was almost directly opposite, on the southern shore of the bay. One of his son's earliest memories had been that of visiting de Neyra's great white house, and romping about its grounds with Delicios de Neyra, who was all of six at that time, and already lovely.

But the unrest which had seized on all the world in 1914 had certainly not stilled Vengentina's predisposition for political rumpusing. De Neyra had to leave the capital twice and was once on the verge of quitting the country; but each time Carte or Vasco Garanullos, the largest planter and rancher and one of the most important individuals in Vengentina, had thrown their influence effectively to his aid.

In 1916, Carte, made restless in Vengentina by the spectacular events taking place

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A more particular observer might have noticed a certain look passing between them as they went by each other.

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elsewhere, came to the United States to see what a perfectly hale, able-bodied, youthful adventurer, who had a son in Flanders with the Black Watch and was himself merely sixty or so, could see. The undecipherable humor of the gods thereupon created for themselves one lingering smile. The man who for twoscore years had courted death by violence, fever and the utmost concentration of excitement as assiduously as any man of his time and come through unscathed, died in a hospital of influenza. Which was no assistance to de Neyra's position at all.

The original Federal Troop had been put down but not eliminated with de Neyra's ascent to the presidency, and in time it reacquired its prestige, gradually absorbing the new army with which de Neyra had come into power or overshadowing the nucleus of the faithful. It had become fashionable for young Vengentinians of family to enter what was in danger of becoming a "crack regiment," and the organization's attitude toward public questions was not by any means improved by this infusion of the best blood.

De Neyra countered by the creation of a new troop round the soldiers he could trust. He had begun the organization of this troop under the guise of the Spanish equivalent of the National Athletic Association to Advance Sport in Vengentina. As the only sports to which the youth of Vengentina was able to lend its temperament were cock-fighting, gambling, revolt, and in the back country certain amicable cowboy frolics with stallions wilder than jaguars, and which annually took bigger toll of life than any Vengentinian revolution, it should have been evident to every one that the *presidente* had a scheme of his own up the sleeves of his linen suit. As a matter of fact, the scholastic eccentricities of de Neyra were so well known and believed to be so well understood in Vengentina that almost every one took him exactly on faith with his fantastic athletic association. But he had a fairly well-trained troop—neither numerically nor from the standpoint of organization as effective as the old Federal Troop, but at least something to fall back on.

In addition, de Neyra had one member of his cabinet whom he could trust completely, Juan Martinez, secretary of the Navy, who had unlimited jurisdiction over the destinies of Vengentina's fleet of three barges, a converted tug with a field-piece in its bow, the presidential launch with the red-and-white awning, the revenue cutter which was all of an eighteen-foot open boat supplied with a ten-horse-power Truslo engine, a still frailer vessel appertaining to the officers of Health, the rowboat of the Holy Virgin Lighthouse at the entrance to Porto Quyaba and odds and ends of diminutive craft officially attached to the harbors of Salcedo and Santa Rita. He made Martinez minister extraordinary in charge of munitions, and overnight, with the aid of the National Athletic Association to Advance Sport in Vengentina, overpowered the old janizary guard at the Arsenal of War and removed the whole of Vengentina's reserve supply of ammunition and arms to a secret cache of his own. If he did not have as powerful an organization as the brooding opposition, he had at least more ammunition, the janizaries being left with no more than a few rounds in their own barracks.

Now, this was all very well. But a few weeks later one of Martinez's men betrayed the secret, and just as he himself had overpowered the Federal Troops at the Arsenal of War, so one night a detachment of these gentlemen started out for the suburb of Chalgres, where the munitions were stored. Martinez did the only thing he could do. In the few minutes he had, he smashed into shapelessness every rifle and side-arm he had in his possession, and dropped the ammunition in the Rio Verde, which, though shallow, was extremely wet. And that ended the available stuff wherewith revolutions are made in Vengentina, the natives of that land enjoying the crackle of firearms and not being inclined to commit themselves to close-in hammering, slugging and cranium-crashing with ungentlemanly cudgels.

ALL these years Kenyon, from his spacious desk in the office of P. W. Brill & Co., had been watching and studying the human nature and political maneuvering of the Republic of Vengentina. Years before he had been infected by the imaginative elder Carte's dreams about the possibilities of that Rio Madagalpa tract. He alone knew of the mineral deposits in the back hills.

Gradually he began throwing out hints of possible assistance to the prominent

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dissenters from the political views of the *presidente* who happened to be hunching their shoulders most conspicuously over the Hôtel Paris tables at the moment. He was shrewd enough to know that de Neyra or any faction aligned with him would refuse to pay him his price, which was the Rio Madagalpa lands, because the president, much as Kenyon could have helped him stabilize his government, was the kind of man to keep green the memory of such a man as Carte. So Kenyon fixed all his attention upon the dissenters. Year after year he continued his long-distance proffers of assistance and increasingly effective propaganda, and his position with P. W. Brill & Co. did not detract from the influence of that propaganda in the least.

If ever the time was ripe for him to recover his equity in the Rio Madagalpa tract and add certain juicy morsels thereto, the time was now. The last seven months he had done what the dissenters in Vengentina had failed to do in a dozen years. He had united the various factions of the Federal Troop and brought in several influential outsiders and had them agree upon Juan Corozal as the successor to de Neyra.

Corozal came from one of the most famous families of Vengentina. He was a sentimental-eyed, puffy young rake, with a monumental capacity for eighteenth-century Castilian oratory, a certain gambler's intelligence and a kind of profligate courage. All that was needed was guns, for the first guns which arrived there meant supremacy for the party that got them, and ammunition. Then, however, after a succession of intrigues with women prominent in Vengentina and the United States, Carozal fell seriously in love with the daughter of de Neyra, Delicios.

For a time this inconvenient affair promised to upset all Kenyon's schemes. But, fortunately for him, Corozal had become too involved in the plotting of his own brother officers, and the girl stood him off. The worst which could happen now was that, with the assumption of power, Corozal would pardon her father to confirm his hold on her. Even he understood that threatening a girl with the removal of her father from the office of president would have nothing but a disastrous effect on his own future.

Here Vasco Garanullos, the planter and rancher, had stood Kenyon in good stead also. The planter's son was one of the four captains of the Federal Troop, which, truth to say, was composed almost exclusively of officers, and for a long time it had been suspected that the father had political ambitions for his son. But Garanullos continued to stand openly by de Neyra until 1908, when they quarreled over the construction and direction of the three-foot-gage steam railroad that was to run from Porto Quyaba to Quama. Garanullos's name on the document which had been lost and was refound seemed to Kenyon his own master-stroke and the warranty seal of success. Garanullos had brought Carozal round now in the matter of Delicios de Neyra.

For two weeks Kenyon had been ready. The only thing required, besides the rifles he had arranged to procure, was the needed assistance of P. W. Brill & Co., which firm, through subtle trade bribes, he believed would be willing to effect the recognition of Carozal when he became president, because complications with de Neyra had reached the point where a president inacceptable to the United States could not be maintained in office. And now even this he was sure of, since Farrell had procured the O. K. of O. C. Vollbrecht, the head of the great corporation.

The cup of Kenyon's joy was filled almost to overflowing. Only one thing annoyed him slightly: Where was Chaffee keeping himself now? Having relocated the two documents, he needed Mr. Chaffee promptly and much for the working-out of minor details. Chaffee, however, was——

It's worth while devoting some detailed attention to where Chaffee was about this time.

REMARKABLE chap in many ways, Chaffee. He was of that not unusual type, an avowed fatalist who does not believe in fate for other people. In the lower regions of the multiplication-table Chaffee was an expert, obstinate mathematician. No power on earth would make him believe that two times two was anything but four. Similarly, he was usually able to convince himself that you could attain four by the simple method of subtracting six from ten or one from five. He was a rationalist by the light of his own experience, and had a pardonable confidence in the

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testimony of his own eyes. Having observed Carte and his antics with the taxi-driver, the feverish intention of Mr. Kenyon to make him subscribe to the theory that Carte was not intoxicated affected him not at all; but in the course of subsequent events a coincidence occurred which set Chaffee's mind at work on one of its favorite problems in elementary arithmetic.

Carte and George Markey, one of the trustiest chauffeurs in the Red-and-Brown's employ, it will be remembered, rolled, dived or dashed into the East River, off Pier 67. Tied to Pier 66 was a small steel freighter, *La Palma*, gross tonnage 2461 tons, which plied between New York and Bahia, touching *en route* Havana, Porto Quyaba, Port of Spain, Georgetown and Maranhão.

Chaffee, with his nose for facts and ability both to remember and correlate them, having noted the name of the boat tied to Pier 66 as a result of overhearing a sailor aboard it shout out something in Spanish, promptly began work upon certain feats of remembering and correlation.

In time—about three hours, to be exact—Chaffee, who on occasion was not adverse to working into the small hours of the morning, located one Eduardo Gonzalez, a gentleman from Vengentina and surrounding territory, of interesting history.

It was Señor Gonzalez's peculiar means of livelihood to keep track of the new arrivals and most recent departures among a certain class of Spanish-speaking visitors to Manhattan. He had built up for himself a considerable clientele interested in such comings and goings, and had a staff, individually dependable, who remained in ignorance of one another, judiciously scattered through the city to aid him. As has been said, Chaffee hunted up Señor Gonzalez, whereupon Chaffee, in the course of a short time—two hours, to be exact—was enabled to attend— Again to interrupt ourselves for a moment——

IN the hold of the *La Palma*, a tier of long, heavy wooden boxes, variously labeled "spades, pickaxes, cultivators, barbed wire, galvanized sheeting and phonographs," had been carefully placed and covered with burlap sacking. Four more tiers were to be added as a top soil—strictly agrarian implements, machine parts, shoes, clothing, print goods, plumbing supplies, Battle Creek furniture and other tranquil accessories of life's daily ways and means. In the absence of the cargo still to come aboard before noon the next day, two men, garbed in the greasy rags of Latin-American deck-hands or stokers, talked quietly.

Between them lay two sets of freshly printed photographic documents. The slighter but more tightly knit of the two men carefully folded one of the sets and slipped it into an envelope, which he sealed. He handed it to his companion.

"Tuck this under your vest, George," he said in a low voice; "and don't grieve about how much care you need in keeping it there."

He folded the other photographic sheets in the same manner, slipped them into another envelope, which he sealed and tucked into the inside pocket of his own dirty waistcoat. He patted the papers flat over his chest and smoothed out the garments above them.

"There goes twin brother—same place. Regard this as a wedding, little playfellow! Me and thee let no man born of woman slice asunder. This disposes of the five of 'em. How things grow, eh, George? First there's the one pair old Kenyon—the mean old thing—tries to keep alone for himself. Little Jack Horner—that's me—comes out of his corner and extracts the raspberry and the huckleberry out of sweet Fatty's gooseberry tart, and brings it to Victoriano Cabrera, the cunning, sleepy dumpling! And little Vic passes the taffy to the charming—and need I say clever?—*señorita* who has left the noble edifice of P. W. Brill for a few minutes of the nonce, as they say, in order to have the morsels preserved—that is, multiplied, perpetuated and increased by the marvelous skill of modern photography. Ain't science wonderful, George?"

"What I want to know is how're we going to stop the *Skudenshavn* without scaring Kenyon bluer than he must be already and queering the whole business?" growled the other.

"For nearly eight months we've been friends, George," said the first man reproachfully, "ever since the night you drove the Señorita de Neyra and myself from the Spanish Museum to the apartment of her uncle—well do I recall the day, Evangeline—and you recognized her and spoke us fair in Spanish, and implied what a helluva

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fine freebooter you had been betwixt the Lesser Antilles and Matina Bay. And in all that time have you ever known me to come straight to the point—answer me that, crass soul?"

"No, I ain't," answered the crass soul truthfully.

"Well then, do not presume, George," the other chided him sternly. "You may fondly imagine that heading for the East River in a taxi in my company gives you certain privileges; but take care, Rudolph——"

"Ah, cheese it, Russ! This ain't no directors' meeting."

The other sighed.

"As I was saying, life is but an empty dream, and the journeys of a taxi are not always what they seem. We've each got one of the copies—that's two; a guy left for Jacksonville to-night with one of them. He'll be there to-morrow night, and in Key West fourteen hours later, and get into Havana a half-day later. Two days later de Neyra will have that pair of copies—that's three. One will be carried by Señorita de Neyra when we sail to-morrow—that's four. And one will arrive in that droll old gentleman, Mr. Farrell's, mail to-morrow, and there you have five. Count 'em over, George!"

"If you're going to have the port people clean out the *Skudenshavn* of those guns, what d'you think Kenyon——"

"Oh, yes—guns—the *Skudenshavn!* Prosaic duffer, ain'tcha, George? One idea at a time and all that. Long before this child, the *señorita* secretary of Mr. Kenyon—Say; I want a front-row seat to get Kenyon's face the day he learns that for more'n half a year he had the daughter of the president of Vengentina working for him! She dropped his little very own originals into some corner or other of Daddy Farrell's office, where they might have been overlooked at the first looking-over. And then, as you remarked, I believe, George, there's the question of the *Skudenshavn's* cargo. They will be compelled to shift the cargo in the *Skudenshavn's* hold to-morrow morning. Observe—a box drops, and cracks. Contraband revealed! As plain as the somewhat commonplace nose on your apparently honest countenance, George! Further observe—a port officer happens to be there. No particular reason. Just happens to be. Strolling round—Mary's lamb! His name, incidentally, is Oscar Duffy—a most eloquent combination, but he's a damned good scout. And a friend of mine. Do you perceive daylight o'er the mountain-tops, George?"

"Yeah," said George slowly. He rapped the covered box on which he sat. "And these guns—you got 'em all dead cinched for delivery?"

" 'Tis said the faithful army of the President of Vengentina will be waiting in Salcedo for them, buddy. And now lend me your ears, because you're going to get a terrific parcel of news." He lowered his voice. "This frigate is due to call at Salcedo. In Salcedo—" He broke off and listened intently. "Did you hear the same thing I did?" he whispered.

"What did you hear?" the other whispered back to him.

"Friends, enemies or rats in the offing—in that direction—" He pointed toward the stern. "Get to the top of the ladder, quick!"

THEY separated with the celerity of perfectly understanding team-mates. The slighter man moved with the velvet agility of a cat or spider over the field of cargo. After a time he apparently satisfied himself that his ears had been mistaken; whereupon he worked round to the six-rung ladder which dropped from the open hatch, and called softly up,

"False alarm, George!"

The other man dropped with a faint thud into the hold again.

"It would be a crime to have the game gummed here—wouldn't it?" he whispered.

"Capital offense!" agreed the other. "My ears must be getting nervous."

They came on deck. The ship might have been deserted for all apparent signs of life on it. Then in the darkness Carte made out a figure leaning against the rail amidships. When they got within a half-dozen steps of it, he saw it was Pedro Cosio, the second mate. They saluted and stopped before him.

"What in hell you two guys doin' down in the hol' now?" he demanded in corrupt Castilian.

Carte shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, Señor Second Mate, the air of this execrable New York is biting and full of ice," he replied in Spanish.

"We were taking a midnight siesta, Señor Second Mate that was all," contributed Markey loquaciously.

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"How in the name of all the Patagonian devils did you two scabby sons of an infinite ancestry of cross-eyed forebears get on this vessel, anyhow, without me seein' you? I was here the whole time waitin' for you," bellowed the second mate, who was a trifle on the old-fashioned order of seaman in his mode of address. "The first mate wan' see you's soon you came 'board. Hâve y' seen him yet?"

"No, *señor*."

"Then you tell him this, thou louse: You tell him you jus' come on—behold! That you come on when I was 'way one li'l minute gettin' a drink—un'erstand?"

Carte saw by the man's eyes and the thickness which crept into his speech, and particularly by the smell which issued with it, that Señor Cosio's minute with the little drink had been of that ambrosial reckoning which has nothing to do with mundane measurements of time. He conquered a passion to fling the foul-mouthed gentleman over the railing, and merely nodded and answered, "Yes, *señor*," saluted and went round the deck to the first-mate's cabin.

They had hardly turned the corner when a long, thin shadow separated itself from the denser shadows of the angle where the saloon bulged out on the deck and attached itself to Cosio's side. A bank-note found itself, seemingly of its own accord, in the tough clutch of the mate's fingers.

"Who were those two gents?" inquiringly whispered the tall shade, which wore a pulled-down Leghorn hat.

The mate looked the newcomer up and down, bringing his face as close up to the vastly superior height of the other as he could. Recognition woke in his little tucked-in, hostile eyes.

"*Ay*, Señor Chaffee! Two lazy spawn of a beach-fish that signed on in Port of Spain last trip."

"You didn't take 'em on up here, then?"

"No; they never sign anybody on up here. You, Señor Chaffee, ought to know that; and they never will as long as they use dollars up here and pesos down below Havana," said the mate bitterly. "What's up with you, eh, Señor Chaffee? Any money in it?"

"I think there will be—later. See you then," said Mr. Chaffee and, making his way to the gang-plank, melted rapidly into the shadows on the pier.

Round in the first-mate's cabin, a hurried and whispered conversation was terminating itself.

"We leave at two o'clock to-morrow, and they should be here at twelve," the first mate was saying in Spanish.

"You say you will be back in two hours?'

"Easy," answered Carte. "Markey will stay on board. You say three staterooms are ready for them, and you're absolutely sure there won't be any other passengers?"

"Yes."

"What time did you call Calderon?"

"Nine o'clock."

"Who'll be up there?"

"Ramon Llerreno——"

"Me and him ain't so friendly. I've sometimes been led to think——"

"And Señorita de Neyra," inserted the first mate slyly.

Carte gave him a quick glance and grinned.

"I'm on my way," he said.

WHEN the *La Palma* steamed past Sandy Hook Lightship the next afternoon, southward bound, it departed from a region which was being electrified by the extraordinary language of Captain Skaars Hasvik of the *Skudenshavn*, out of whose hold a carefully packed cargo was being laboriously lifted. He was due to call at Santa Rita, Vengentina, for a shipment to Kingston whether he carried Carozal's rifles or not. Yet Captain Hasvik was swearing more from principle than conviction, however, because he abominated delays. He was a man who would have converted his wallowing old tramp hog of a steamer into a floating Ritz if he thought it would have netted him ten per cent. on capital and labor involved above what he made in handling galvanized junk and Mission furniture and things messy and hideous and doubtfully useful round the world and back again.

He had come across a fair balm for the wounds inflicted on him when one Oscar Duffy ordered portions of the *Skudenshavn's* cargo out again, and so it was that, retiring with a bottle of something powerful and Norwegian into the privacy of his cabin, he continued to swear picturesquely and terrifically but not whole-heartedly, and rather for the sake of practise and on general principles, being, one might say, by nature a swearing man.

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Also, when the *La Palma* passed Sandy Hook Lightship, southward bound, it carried two passengers for whom preparation had been made at the eleventh hour. These two were a bearded, corpulent and bandage-swathed invalid in a wheel-chair and his personal attendant, a high-reaching, cadaverous individual with a thick grayish beard, grayish mustache and a mop of tangled grayish hair which made his naturally pallid blue eyes still paler. These gentlemen found accommodation in the room of the second mate, Señor Pedro Cosio, who normally had no reputation whatever for putting himself out for any one, least of all out of his own bunk. But Señor Cosio had been prevailed upon, and companion bills to the one thrust into his hand the night before by Mr. Chaffee reposed now in an inner pocket to console him for the crowded accommodations he shared with the quartermaster.

ONCE in the mate's room with the invalid Mr. Kenyon, Mr. Chaffee rubbed his hands in high satisfaction. It had been a little difficult in bringing Mr. Kenyon round to his own way of plotting in such short time, but it had been done, and the considerable receipts to accrue to him from his interest in Mr. Kenyon's plans were unmistakably written down.

Mr. Chaffee had come upon Mr. Kenyon in the early morning and genially implied that information had been received which demanded precipitate up-and-doing.

Whereupon Mr. Chaffee had momentarily detoured himself with a scant excursion into metaphysical by-paths. He had expounded to the mystified fat man who regarded him from out of the environs of pink pajamas, wrecked slumber and the depths of a Morris chair with a bewildered and reproachful astonishment what he called the "first axioms of conspiracy."

The best way to further one's own plans, explained Mr. Chaffee abstractly, was to get them as near in accordance as possible with the plans of those who were seemingly plotting against one, and permit the party of the other part to do the majority of the fundamental "dirty work." The fine art of conspiracy, as Mr. Chaffee explained it to Mr. Kenyon in the early morning, was not so much in plotting on one's own behalf as in getting the inside dope on the plotting of the opposition, and permitting it to render you all feasible assistance. One must not be snobbish and refuse to avail oneself of any assistance which the other side might feel called upon to render one, Mr. Chaffee pointed out.

In final words, he concluded playfully, the really refined art of conspiring was not counterplotting but in coplotting. Having rid himself of these generalities to Mr. Kenyon, who was, truth to say, not quite up to the requisite mark of wakefulness to appreciate them fully, Mr. Chaffee came to specific instances.

Carozal's party, cheated of the available Vengentinian armament, required munitions before anything else. The de Neyra group had put the quietus, or was about to do so, on the shipment Mr. Kenyon had produced. Just when life had been full of joy for Mr. Kenyon again and, as he thought, his troubles had ended with the refinding of the lost papers, the explanation of what had actually happened to those papers shocked him more than deeply. Under his creased pink pajamas his whole soft structure wabbled distressfully at this blow. For a long time he refused to be cheered at the strange glee which was animating Mr. Chaffee. But Mr. Chaffee continued merrily against Mr. Kenyon's vast gloom.

The de Neyra group itself had procured munitions and was sending them to Vengentina. The arrival of these munitions in Salcedo and into the hands of de Neyra's soldiers would about mean an end to Carozal's chances. How to stop that? Return tit for tat, and tip off the port authorities on the nature of the *La Palma's* cargo, as they had been or were going to be tipped off on the *Skudenshavn's?* That would be mean. More than mean, it would be damned silly, said Mr. Chaffee. Instead, Mr. Chaffee had already had a talk with the captain of the *La Palma*, Davilla Cantu, whom he had known of yore. This little talk, just concluded, with the captain of the *La Palma* had convinced Mr. Chaffee that it would not be impossible to have the *La Palma* forget about Salcedo and make the first stop at Porto Quyaba, where Juan Carozal's soldiers would be waiting to relieve the *La Palma* of her cargo, having been apprised of that cargo's nature by a fast boat which would be engaged for that purpose to precede the *La Palma* out of Havana, where it was scheduled to call.

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Slowly Mr. Kenyon saw the daylight, which was just then growing quite strong in his room. He saw the undeniable truth, too, of another one of those axiomatic principles of success in the fine art of counter- or coplotting, as elucidated by Mr. Chaffee. Namely, the greatest possible proximity of the counter- or coplotters to the plotters. Not merely that, but as Mr. Chaffee was able without much trouble to convince Mr. Kenyon now that, as their plans were certain of instant maturity as soon as the *La Palma* on her altered course would touch Porto Quyaba, it behooved Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Chaffee to be on hand at the division of the spoils, Vengentinian cabalists and leaders of the opposition being notoriously slack in the fulfilment of promises while the promisees remained at a distance.

But Mr. Kenyon still shrank from juxtapositing his ponderous self to Carte and any others who might know him aboard the *La Palma*. If he went at all, he would go on the *Skudenshavn*, he said.

"Sure you might go on the *Skudenshavn*," agreed Mr. Chaffee blandly. "And when do you think the old tub will get to a start now, what with Skaars Hasvik boiling round for a new cargo, because don't ever believe that old pawnbroker'll sail s'long's there's a tin-can's amount o' empty space in his hold. Bah! Kenyon, sedent'ry labors've made you fat in other places than your waist-line. Dope this thing out for yourself. I c'n fix you up to get by Carte on the *La Palma*, and I c'n have him kept out of the way while we're coming aboard. Once on, you can keep as shady as you want to. And the make-up'll make you safe from that inquiring-minded young dame who's been working right next to you for half a year. The *La Palma* for yours, kid. You'll be Mr. Pearson, an invalid gent bound for Brazil where all the nuts grow what cure all pains, and I'll be your faithful squire. Good name for me: Henry Squires—that's me!"

Mr. Kenyon thereupon got ready for points south, delaying only long enough to create a more or less plausible excuse to P. W. Brill & Co. for this abrupt departure and to intercept Mr. Farrell's morning mail, from which he extracted the envelope bearing the photographic copies of the Carozal communications to him. In the mean time Mr. Chaffee arranged other matters; then, before they found time heavy on their hands, they arrayed themselves appropriately for the occasion and came aboard the *La Palma*.

KENYON and Chaffee kept pretty much to their own room on the way to Havana day and night. Occasionally Mr. Chaffee wandered abroad after dark to see what he could see and to hear what he could listen in upon. But as he was a man who had learned the difficult lesson of letting well enough and better-than-was-to-be-expected alone, he did not crowd his luck by taking undue chances of being discovered as one having an unusual interest in the Vengentinians aboard the *La Palma*. He had enough to talk over with Kenyon as new possibilities of the situation suggested themselves to them from hour to hour to make close confinement in the second-mate's stateroom not too monotonous.

Carte and Markey seldom came on deck, and still more rarely did they ever come up together. Although the de Neyra party could have found much to talk about together, there were too many people who understood Spanish on the vessel to make conferences anything but dangerous; besides, there was no urgent need for any special gathering. Three or four times a day Carte might have passed Delicios on deck, but a casual observer would never have noted in their nonchalance that they knew each other—that, indeed, there was any such thing as intimacy between the well-dressed girl and the greasy deck-hand. A more particular observer might have noticed, or fancied that he did, a certain look passing between them as they went by each other—a look of more than nonchalant intentness, holding them together for just a significant fraction of a second. Five or six times they encountered each other in various out-of-the-way parts of the boat with an assuredness of meeting which might have been prearranged. These meetings were of necessity brief and wary. A whispered word or two, a hand-grasp—that had to be all. But each time Carte went on toward some shadowed entranceway, through or down which he would disappear with head held higher and eyes shining. And each time Delicios de Neyra, risking a lingering soft glance at his retreating form, also seemed to hold her head higher and go about her graceful ways with eyes that also shone.

Their meetings were made more difficult

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than was necessary by Llereno, who did his best to keep Delicios in sight whenever she came out of her stateroom. With each of the meetings with Carte that he witnessed, tense lines uncovered themselves in his face, his lips quivered petulantly and his keen black eyes lighted with a threatening fire.

THE evening before they reached Havana, Chaffee came cautiously on deck for air. He paused for a moment outside the softly closed door of his cabin and peered up and down. Three steps were sufficient to take him to the ladder which led him to the little upper deck, which was dark except for the faint light which issued from the wheel-house jutting out directly in front of the funnel. He started aft in the dark when a murmur of voices from the other side of the funnel reached him. He caught at a ventilator and twisted himself round it and across the narrow space which separated him from the broad, low seat which circled the short, fat smoke-pipe of the ship. He had hardly let himself down when he heard Carte's voice saying softly,

"Good-night, dear."

The next moment, even while a deliciously soft feminine voice answered in Spanish, "Dear one, good-night!" a dark form came round from the other side of the funnel, struck diagonally across the deck and disappeared in the darkness. It was Carte.

Chaffee curled his long form in serpentine fashion round the funnel, expecting Delicios to come by on his side, but suddenly another masculine voice, louder than the other and vibrant with bitter, cheated passion, sliced through the stillness.

"I heard what you said!" flayed this new voice, which Chaffee recognized as Ramon Llereno's. "You can't lead me on any longer. Delicios, I am going to do one of two things—listen to me, do you hear me?—either I will kill that abominable Yankee or I will arrange things so that the cargo in this boat will never be delivered where it is expected, and after that neither you nor I nor any one else will be able to help you."

Through the entire thin length of Mr. Chaffee rippled an inaudible chuckle.

"A customer!" he whispered delightedly to himself.

He heard Delicios gasp,

"Ramon, you don't mean that!"

"Most revered cousin, I irrevocably do!" answered Llereno, with elaborate mockery.

There was a quick scuffle on the deck on the other side of the funnel and a startled feminine *"Ay!"* Chaffee lifted his head quickly, like a hound who has been in at many a killing, then eased himself down again and grinned. The soft thud he had waited for had not come. He visualized exactly what Llereno had done—drawn close to the girl and gripped her wrists.

"Delicios de Neyra, now you will promise me the thing I have implored you to promise me for six years! The thing I implored you to promise me when I came back from England just after you came back to Porto Quyaba from school the first time—on the path behind the blue roses in your father's garden. The thing I went to Washington to ask you when you had gone back to school—two, three, four times. The thing I asked you again and again each time you returned to Porto Quyaba, and each time you left Porto Quyaba and each time I came to these execrable United States. The thing I came north for the last time when you had finished college and you were down in Washington, where I found Carte, too, just after he had come from Porto Quyaba this last time, and when I hardly knew where you were, although he always seemed to know so much better than we of your family did. Now you shall promise me!"

There was a moment's silence. Again that faint shuff of scuffling, and again Chaffee raised his head eagerly.

"Let go my wrists, Ramon; you are hurting me," replied the girl quietly. "I shall answer you, but tell me—have you no understanding, no sympathy in the world for the position I am in when I think of father in Vengentina?"

"I understand; I sympathize, Delicios—I will help you as no one in the world could help you if you will only——"

"Bribe you? Have you no feeling for anything in the world but yourself?"

"For myself no feeling in the world whatever—but for you everything!"

"For me—everything! And for Vengentina and your own loyalty—nothing?"

"You are both Vengentina and loyalty to me."

"In that case, I shall answer the only way left to me," she said softly. "I

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promise to give you my answer the day my father is safe and his position secure."

"But I cannot——"

"And I dare not answer in any other way now, after what you have said, Ramon."

The determination in her voice silenced the other only momentarily.

"Then—tell me this: If you answer me as you should, I shall be satisfied, and in all the world there will be no one, Delicios, who will work for you and your father and Vengentina as I will. Do you love Russell Carte?"

"By what right dare you ask me that?" demanded the girl, with a high note of indignation in her voice. "By what right dare you—even because you say you love me?"

"I say it because I love you more than any perfidious gringo of the North ever has loved you, Delicios. I dare to say it because I am your cousin, and I will compel you to answer me!" he said, with a tense rapidity that showed him entirely unabashed by the indignation he had stung to life in her.

When she replied, Chaffee noted that her voice had grown limp.

"And otherwise you will not help me—and we need your help and faithfulness so much; nor unless I answer you in one way, can we depend upon your loyalty," she said half to herself, so softly that Chaffee could hardly hear her. "But whether or not I love him is a theme which you who love me and think you know me should know that I would not barter about with another in words and in pledges—is that not so? You are a strange wooer, my cousin. The fervor of your adoration leaves me no escape. I will promise you one thing at least that you desire to have me promise you, do you not?"

"Go on!" he pressed eagerly.

"I promise you, Ramon, that I shall not marry Russell Carte."

"You promise that?" he exclaimed rapturously. "You swear to that?"

"Neither the daughter of the President of Vengentina nor I, myself, need to swear, Ramon, where we have given merely our word. Come; let us go below!"

In the darkness of the funnel-seat, Chaffee uncoiled his reptilian form, brought himself to a semblance of sitting posture and scratched his mop of false hair as he listened to the descent of Delicios de Neyra and Ramon Llereno down the ladder.

HAVANA!

Mr. Chaffee was a busy man from the moment the *La Palma* passed Morro Castle and the fleet of lighters spied her. He went ashore and speedily, in his own inimitable way, located a group of trusty old companions and arranged for the possession of a fast small boat, the *Condor*, which could accommodate twenty-five gentlemen of divers parts in whose monetary loyalty and gratuitous fighting ability he had most wholehearted and well-founded confidence. The dirty little ex-yacht, capable of a dozen knots an hour more than the *La Palma*, was on its way with explicit tidings to Carozal six hours before the *La Palma* left Havana.

The atmosphere aboard the *La Palma* became charged with an undercurrent of excitement the moment that vessel began to steam past Marianao Beach, and it grew steadily as it skirted the southeastern gap of the Gulf of Mexico and plowed round through the Yucatan Channel past Cape San Antonio into the Caribbean.

Mr. Chaffee left Mr. Pearson, *né* Kenyon, dolorously snoring in their cabin, and came boldly on deck. He sauntered over to the lee side of the chart-house and stood gazing absently at a dark smudge on the horizon to the northwest.

It grew steadily more distinct, metamorphosing itself into a vessel of moderate size. Even at that distance something vaguely familiar about it pinched Mr. Chaffee's consciousness and he focused his pale-blue eyes on it intently. He wandered up to the wheelhouse and on the port side of the bridge came on the captain, a Peruvian of commonplace enough aspect, but whose features took on a curious apish quality with an obsequious smirk that appeared on them at the slightest occasion or no occasion at all. He led the captain to the starboard end of the bridge and pointed out the strange ship bucking through the sea. The captain examined it through his glass and handed it to Chaffee. One look, and Chaffee understood why the distant vessel had interested him.

It was the *Skudenshavn*, stripped of one portion of its cargo, lashing itself through the Caribbean in tropical Skaars Hasvik fashion, hell-bent-for-election, to make up in

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time what it had lost in cash on that trip. Mr. Chaffee grinned broadly, handed the captain's glass back to him and meandered unhurriedly round to his cabin and the companionship of the slumbering Mr. Kenyon.

"Mr. Pearson—oh, say, Mr. Pearson! Awake, sir!" said Mr. Chaffee, jabbing his long fingers into the soft area of Mr. Kenyon directly over that gentleman's ribs.

"Wha-what is it?" stuttered Mr. Kenyon, sitting up abruptly.

"'Tis a break in the monotony of voyaging, sir," responded Chaffee respectfully; "and a damned funny sketch of old Skaars Hasvik sore as a pup on the high seas. Come here and look!"

Mr. Kenyon came to the window with commendable alacrity.

"There—pipe the squarehead! It's the *Skudenshavn!*"

Mr. Kenyon looked, and then he, too, grinned.

"That boat is certainly making time," said Mr. Kenyon jovially. "Wouldn't think it was in the old tub, would you? How do you account for it?"

"She is probably traveling light, Mr. Pearson—what?"

Kenyon roared with laughter.

"Must have lost some of her cargo, eh?"

Others had seen the *Skudenshavn* also. Beside the capstan on the forecastle head Carte stood for nearly half an hour grimly regarding the ungainly tramp.

"Old Skaars Hasvik is going to rip the planks apart if he keeps that up," murmured Carte to himself, and then he hummed a stanza several times:

> "Oscar Duffy 's a friend of mine,
> A friend of mine, a friend of mine!
> Oh, Oscar Duffy 's a friend of mine!
> I'll say he is, he is!"

They were to touch Salcedo the next day, and for the first time since leaving New York the de Neyra group arranged for a conference to take place in Eugenio Calderon's cabin at half-past nine that night. The principal motive power of Latin-American plotting of insurrections and the prevention of them is the secret gathering and the interminable debate. As a matter of fact, the plans had been so well laid that there was really nothing to confer about, but Carte, understanding the high pressure of Latin excitability on the eve of action, gave in to Calderon's quest and Llereno's demand, and, with Markey on guard, attended the gathering.

Calderon's room faced the deck, but could only be reached by a short, narrow corridor which ran between the two cabins occupied by Delicios and Llereno from the companionway and passageway that cut across the vessel amidships. Markey took his place at the rail directly opposite the companionway. From here he could keep a complete surveillance on the deck and Calderon's windows, also upon the passageway into which the corridor leading to Calderon's cabin opened. Eleven o'clock exactly, the second mate, Cosio, who had utterly no business to be abroad at that time, sauntered up and addressed Markey in a characteristic fashion.

"You scaly beach-comber, what in the name of hell are you doing here at this hour?"

Markey, who had slackened into a posture resembling sleep while standing, straightened himself with an excellently feigned start and saluted drowsily.

"*Si, señor!*" He saluted again and without more ado started clumsily off. As he came oppsite Calderon's dimly lighted window, he burst into something that might remotely have resembled song, and the words, translated from *patois* Spanish, were something like this:

> I looked and she was there;
> I looked and she was not.
> But whether she was there or not
> Is something I forgot.

"Shut up, you immoral dog!" bellowed the second mate after Markey, whose retreat, appreciably accelerated by the impetus of Señor Cosio's propelling voice, was still more hurried by the propelling effect of the second-mate's rapidly following footsteps.

HARDLY had Markey and mate disappeared in the obscurity of the stern and clattered below, one after the other, when an elongated figure stood in the passageway entrance at the other side of the deck. He entered it. As he did so, the one light which had been burning in it was turned out, and it was filled with almost absolute darkness. Only against the background of the semi-phosphorescent Caribbean could any one at either end of the passageway have seen that the tall man hesitated for a

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moment at the corridor leading to Calderon's cabin. Then he emerged on the deck and stole up beside the dimly lighted window. He bent his head toward it, started back and turned. He thought he heard a noise in the darkened passageway through which he had just come. He listened intently, went back and shot a flash-light through it. Nothing. He returned to the window.

TO KEEP voices at the level of a whisper for over an hour is a task to try the endurance of a phlegmatic people. The natives of Vengentina are not phlegmatic. The conversational pitch of the secret conference in Señor Calderon's cabin had reached between Calderon and Llereno the penetrative power of high C. A deaf man with his ear to the window would not have been able to understand what was being discussed in there.

However, Mr. Chaffee was not deaf. He prepared himself for a reasonably cautious but pleasurable and highly gainful session, and indeed the first thing which he overheard was a recital by Señor Calderon, of the gentlemen of the Federal Troop, which was presumably supporting Juan Carozal with unanimous devotion, who could be depended upon to switch to de Neyra's party the moment things began to look shaky for the new aspirant to the presidential chair of Vengentina. Mentally making an indelible note of name after name as Señor Calderon repeated it, Mr. Chaffee's concentration in the very midst of the most interested effort was rudely shattered.

"Peg o' my heart, the Lord of the Pink Tulip calleth!" a musically low voice whispered into Mr. Chaffee's ears, to the simultaneous accompaniment of a steelly prodding of something menacing in the center of his back. "Wilt thou oblige the Pink Tulip's humble servitor and turn your damned carcass ninety-eight degrees northeast and march briskly, but not too briskly, straight ahead till I tell you to stop, or I'll check the essence of thee over a freight-line that only handles microscopic parcels and was never tied up by a strike. In plain words, kind stranger, I am going to puncture your tire with six pieces of lead if you show the faintest flicker of independent action. Now, march, damn you, march!"

Mr. Chaffee, of whom it has already been said that he was not deaf, and who got in the whispered instructions of Carte the unmistakable accents of old "Go-Carte" at his most all-fired topmost of determination, showed not the slightest intention of embarking upon the unsafe sea of independent action, but marched straight ahead.

"Turn in here," whispered Carte, as they came abreast an open door. "We are going straight down, through the engine-room and into the storeroom, and if we pass anybody you just look naturally pleasant and noncommittal, sweet Pom-pom, and pay no attention to any little mental suggestion which might lead you into the independent activities which I think I mentioned before."

Only the engineer's assistant and a stoker gave them an indolent passing glance on their way, and Chaffee obeyed to the letter Carte's instructions. A dim electric bulb gleamed weakly in the storeroom. Carte ordered Chaffee to sit on a box directly under it. For a moment he examined his lengthy prisoner intently.

"Thou graceful giraffe, where have I seen thy likes before?" He meditated absently, toying with his automatic two feet in front of Chaffee's chest. "Tell me—are you all in one part or are you a serial?"

Chaffee smiled sourly.

"I don't feel all here now," he admitted. "Would you mind operating that gimcrack a little less nervously." He smiled a little more engagingly. "And as just between friends, would you mind telling me what you mean by this gunman stuff on the high seas? D'you think you're in New York?"

With a quick movement, Carte reached out, and Chaffee's mop of hair came off.

"Ah-ha! The villain is uncovered!" With a single other quick movement he ripped off Chaffee's false mustache and beard. "Elias Chaffee himself—no less! Well, I will be damned! How in the name of the cat's nine lives did *you* horn in on this?"

"My son, the older generation you have with you always," answered Chaffee, unembarrased, vigorously rubbing his head. "That wig's been itching all day."

"Just you keep your hands where they are now, right on top of your head. Don't you ever die? Don't you know how to decease? Haven't you the least shred of a decent sense of obligation to the world? What are you hanging on for? I heard you were popped off down in Peru a year ago. I

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went out and bought a dinner at the Waldorf to celebrate, and here you come and spoil all my pleasure and belief in the word of men. Dear one, now you are in danger. I don't know when you began butting in on our little party; but knowing you, grenadier, I suspect the intrusion was not recent. Anyhow, I am going to find out, Chaffee. You're slated to do a lot of truthful answering, because I am so near the thing I have been aiming at that seven feet of uncommonly obnoxious bone and skin and vile disposition are not going to queer me now. First off, just flap your wings north, as high over your mean little head as you can reach without poking through the deck. Up, kiddo; up!"

Chaffee complied, although his face expressed no keen satisfaction with this particular moment in his turbulent life's history. Keeping the point of his automatic firmly in the geometric center of Mr. Chaffee's stomach, Carte deftly pulled out of the other's inside pockets a pocketbook, wallet, letters, papers and a thin leather note-book.

"A good night's work," he murmured approvingly. "Now, you just go on scratching your head again while I take a peep at this."

He lowered his automatic and glanced down at the stuff he held in his other hand. The same instant, a heavy, nail-hard mass struck with terrific impact on his back and shoulders. He crumbled to the floor, the automatic knocked out of his hand, the papers, pocketbook, wallet and note-book fantastically scattered, and two brute arms entwined themselves under his own armpits while a pair of steellike hands joined behind his neck in an unbreakable grip. He was spun round, let loose for a second, and something crashed against his jaw.

When he came partly to his senses, a dozen feet from where he had been originally standing, Mr. Chaffee was straddling him, and in that tall gentleman's prehensile digits his own automatic regarded him unblinkingly straight in the eyes, and the gorilla-shouldered second mate, Cosio, stood glowering over him to one side, and the captain of the *La Palma* ditto on the other.

"Cosio, you are an artist and a medicine-man, and for timeliness no alarm-clock can touch you. Now, patootie"—Chaffee affectionately kicked Carte in the ribs—"as we sing in Paris, 'It's a good night's work!' Pedro, bring down eight furlongs of tested rope to truss up sweet little Buttercup here."

In five minutes, Carte, securely and painfully tied, was again flung on the floor of the storeroom, in a crevice between two solid walls of boxes.

"There! He is tied up as fine as his brother swine, the other *Norte Americano!*" said Señor Cosio.

"We bid him good-night, wishing him happy dreams," chuckled Chaffee. "Cosio, get a man you can trust and keep him moving round here for security. If anything turns up while he is here, give him strict orders to shoot fast, hard and straight into our little mascot." And Chaffee fraternally indicated Carte once more with his foot, and the three of them moved off.

THE first intimation of anything amiss came to Delicios shortly after noon. From Cape San Antonio and Cantiles Key on the east, to Ascension Bay on the other side of Yucatan Channel down to Porto Quyaba, she knew every inch of the waters of the Caribbean. Her interest was now so potently centered on Salcedo that she was even more keenly concerned with the course of the *La Palma* than she normally would have been.

At twelve o'clock noon they passed to the east of Misteriosa Bank instead of to the Central-American landward. She hurried to the wheel-room, but only the quartermaster was there, a stoop-shouldered, shifty-eyed being given to silence. Neither was Captain Cantu in the chart-room, nor in his own room, which was farthest stern. It was almost forty minutes before she came down the passageway leading to the lazaret and found him closeted there with the first mate. She had only hesitated a moment in entering the iodoform-scented room, where men, dying of fever had been brought. The first mate, whom she trusted implicitly, had a strained look on his face which alarmed her more than the inexplicable détour which the *La Palma* made round Misteriosa Bank.

"What is the meaning of this?" she demanded of the captain.

"The meaning of what, *señorita?*" he countered, rising, bowing.

"You are taking the wrong course—you are not going to Salcedo. You are going away from it!"

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The captain pointed to the table at which he had been sitting with the first mate, indicating a yellow paper scrawled over with writing. He picked it up and passed it to her with the action of a butler extending a nectarine on a gold platter.

It was a wireless dispatch received at fourteen minutes after eleven that morning by the operator of the *La Palma*, and was in the form of instructions from the British cruiser, H. M. S. *Sudan*, Captain Howard Winston, commander.

Trouble in Salcedo. Drifting German mine observed this morning going south by southeast, latitude 83° 26′ 7″ west; longitude 19° 39′ 41″ north at 10:25 A.M. Keep in touch with us and continue to Porto Quyaba without delay. Imperative.

"Why, this is ridiculous!" protested Delicios. "This is not even in the form of a genuine British wireless. This vessel has been chartered to stop at Salcedo, and for one moment do you imagine that anything as childishly, absurdly, idiotically naive as this shall prevent it?"

"Not a British wireless!" exclaimed the captain, throwing his hands over his head in holy amazement. "Señorita de Neyra—you think that I, Captain Davilla Cantu, who have received hundreds—yes, thousands of British wireless messages in my lifetime in these waters—that I would not know a British message of the wireless? *Señorita*, I do not understand you," he protested, hurt to his soul.

"It makes no difference whether you understand me or not, Señor Captain, but this much you can understand: you will repair at once to Salcedo."

The captain drew himself up proudly.

"Señorita Delicios de Neyra, is it you who are captain of the *La Palma* or is it I? Is it you who are responsible to the owners for the safety of this vessel and her cargo? Is it you who are answerable to God and the Sacred Virgin for the lives of all on board this vessel or is it I? Knowing how grieved you are that I am compelled to change the course, I give you permission to go up to the wireless-room now, where messages are coming in from British battle-ships and other boats. We are sending messages out ourselves, all bearing on this mine and the insurrection in Salcedo harbor——"

"Insurrection!"

"Aye; insurrection, *señorita!* Go up and convince yourself—this much you may do. But there is one thing you may not do, or any one on board this vessel while I am captain of it—that is to dictate to me what I must do!"

He opened the door for her which she had closed behind her, and with his insufferable smirk he seemed to motion her out. Bewildered though she was, and that not so much by what the captain had told her but because she had in truth been aware of an unusual activity of crackling and sparking up in the wireless-room shortly before, she was even more bitterly certain that some kind of calamitous hoax was being imposed on her.

She shrugged her shoulders and left the lazaret followed by the captain and the silent, worried-looking first mate. On deck, striving desperately to think of some promising course of action to gain time, she evinced an interest she had utterly no heart in in the captain's insistence that she accompany him to the wireless and see for herself what messages were constantly coming in relating to the drifting German mine discovered on this day of all days, three or more years after it had been laid.

TRUE enough, new messages did seem to come in, and were translated by the operator, a jerky, wiry Mexican, and these messages purported to be from H. M. S. *Sudan*, giving new locations of the mine and insisting repeatedly that the *La Palma* keep on a due course for Porto Quyaba and nowhere else. As well as she could she feigned credence in the messages and the captain's expostulations until she felt that she had satisfied him into believing that she believed him.

She tried to speak to the first mate alone. It was plain to her that he had something to tell her; but the captain kept him unremittingly by him, and it was obviously no intention of his that she should confer with the mate privately. The only thing to do was to get hold of Carte without delay.

She walked round the deck several times and went below to the engine-room, approaching in all her excursions as nearly as she could the aspect of the typically bored traveler with an inquiring mind. But neither Carte nor Markey was anywhere to be seen. She went up to Calderon's cabin and found him and Llereno subdued by

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the volubility of the previous evening's conference to a state of passive anticipation of thrills, playing chess. As undramatically as possible she informed them of the changed direction of the *La Palma*, the wireless messages and her interview with the captain.

Calderon sat bolt upright in his chair and launched into grandiloquence, the intent of which was to prove that what she had told them was impossible, being incredible. Llereno, who had risen, proclaimed majestically that he himself would see whether any Captain Davilla Cantu or any British navy could arbitrarily change the course of a ship he was on, to say nothing of the course of Vengentinian politics and civil wars. It was absolutely characteristic of both men, of Vengentinians in general and of Vengentinian politics and civil wars, she reflected grimly, that Llereno and Calderon, however, before going forth to corner the captain, paused first to conclude three fascinating moves in their chess game, whereby Calderon secured a unique checkmate.

Theatrically shocked and sufficiently stultified by her news though they were, that game had to be finished. Heart-sick at the situation and then, despite the thoroughness with which she was acquainted with them, she caught herself up and collected her thoughts. It seemed to her now that her failure to run across Carte, which, of course, had been nothing unusual throughout the voyage and entirely in line with plans he himself had made the evening before, did alarm her more than the captain's admission that he had changed the course of the *La Palma* and was deliberately avoiding Salcedo. Llereno, chagrined at losing the game, burst into a sardonic and triumphant laughter.

"Have I not told you all? Have I not told you a thousand times, Delicios, you could not trust that despicable Yankee, Carte?" he gloated. "He has betrayed you, cousin! He has sold the plans of our sacred country, *señorita!* It is as obvious as a child's falsehood!"

Delicios pressed her hands to her breast. Her face was pale.

"Even you, Ramon, must know what an outrageous lie, as obvious as child's falsehood, you speak now," she said quietly.

But that moment she felt that she must find Carte more than ever. She took command of the group, and sent them up with instructions to hold the captain tightly in interview for at least thirty minutes. She hurried them out of the cabin and parted from them at the companionway. While they went round the deck and up to the bridge, she descended the rubber-padded stairs and began a search for Carte.

OUTSIDE the engine-room she was suddenly confronted by the second mate. She wanted to ask him some question—she did not herself know what—which might lead the conversation round to the point where she, a passenger and the daughter of the President of Vengentina, could inquire about a common deck-hand on the *La Palma*, when some half-glance of suspicion, perhaps something she noted in his face, restrained her. For a moment Cosio seemed minded rudely to block her way ahead, and then unexpectedly he stood aside, cap in hand. She hurried by him across the engine-room gallery again, and along the passage past the galley. At a turn in the passageway she stopped and looked behind her. No one was watching. She followed the dirty, smelly corridor and came to the door of the storeroom. She hesitated, and opened the door.

It was a moment before her eyes became accustomed to the dim light on the single bulb whose illumination had been still further dimmed by a paper bag slipped over it. As she started to cross the gloomy space, she stepped back, startled. A man had risen as though from nowhere before her.

"*Ay;* am I dreaming, *señorita!*" He breathed heavily, fastening upon her two languorous eyes which, even in the dusk of the storeroom, shone with a phosphorescent desirousness that froze something in her.

She retreated a step and then suddenly darted by him. She heard him following, but continued on toward the door she believed to be at the other end, through the middle aisle between dim crags of boxes, bags, cartons, when she was confronted by a bulk of stores, roped and fastened down, which stretched from the floor to the ceiling. She turned, sick with black panic. She dashed aggressively back, straight at the man who was coming lurchingly at her. As they met, she crowded as far as she could to one side and into a crevice about a yard wide

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between two walls of boxes. Desperately eager to avoid the possibility of being driven into that black opening, she plunged wildly ahead, in doing so avoiding by an inch stepping upon a tied and gagged bundle which lay there. Carte had heard her, but he was able to make only one infinitesimal twist against the expert wrapping-up he had suffered at Cosio's hands.

She saw a hand stretched out to grasp her from behind and tugged herself loose beneath it, and had almost evaded it when another great dirty hand grasped her body. She kicked and struck with all her might and sank her teeth into the filthy fingers, but the man crushed her close to him, stepping back into the opening as he did so and treading against the head of the helpless Carte, who was consuming his sole and last particle of strength against the fiendish security of Cosio's knots. The seaman tried to turn and force her into the opening. For a second he unloosened his arms, then brought them back into a still firmer grip about her, and his hot lips pressed against her neck.

She went limp with horror against the obscenity of his touch, and then with some great, instinctive fund of strength granted her by she knew not what agency, she burst forth in the last assault of inhuman struggling against him, and at the same moment she suddenly felt his hold on her relax, and he plunged forward with her and they both fell. The next instant he was yanked from her, and she heard a sickening double thud, as of a terrible impact striking the man's head and driving it against the wall of boxes, followed by the duller bump of his body on the floor. In that moment she did think that Carte had found her in time, and the thought revived her magically. But when she rose and turned, the man there was not Carte but the little evil-faced, gorilla-spanned second mate, Pedro Cosio.

"*Señorita* is venturesome," he simpered. "What could have induced the *señorita* to come here?"

"I—I want to get out!" she stammered, and staggered past him.

He permitted her to go, his little piggish eyes watching her greedily, and when she had reached the door, he turned merely once, brutally to kick the unconscious man at his feet.

"Cargo-rat, did you imagine she was for you?" he hissed. He turned and kicked into the opening between the boxes at the helpless form he had tied and flung there. "Nor is she for you either, you masquerading gringo!" And he turned and followed the girl.

DELICIOS was unable to avoid transmitting her own panic at the strange disappearance of Carte to the others. She and Calderon lived through the gruesome hours on the way to Porto Quyaba, feeling that their plans were shattered, that something disastrous, they knew not what, was awaiting them in the capital. Worst of all, there hovered over them continuously a tormenting sense of being watched.

Llereno alone seemed unaffected by the turn things had taken. He was convinced that Carte had betrayed them. The game was up. That was all. He was reconciled, because, if anything, it must bring Delicios closer to him. That she would give him his answer, even though her father's position was not secure, he had no doubt, now that Carte had eliminated himself by his treachery. He would take Delicios to Paris—to London—across the Atlantic somewhere. He had money—he would have her. That insured the sufficiency of life.

Delicios rewon her self-possession. She realized what Calderon and Llereno failed or refused to realize—that expostulations were vain and simply made matters worse and their own position more precarious.

She sought once more to get in touch with the first mate, but each time she saw him he was either in company with the captain, or else the second mate or a seaman or the quartermaster would approach him immediately to insist that the captain requested to speak to him without delay. And then, as completely as Carte seemed to have been swallowed up, the first mate disappeared also, and thereafter Davilla Cantu avoided her. She addressed several of the crew with an inquiry about the first mate, but none seemed to know where he was. Twice she approached Cosio on the subject. He was instant eager service, and would start out to find the first mate for her—but each time, before he had a chance to locate him, he was called away on some mysterious duty.

They should have made Porto Quyaba at five o'clock by the safe Esperanza

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"Elias Chaffee himself—no less! How in the name of the cat's nine lives did *you* horn in on this?"

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Passage. Instead, they sailed far out to sea and circled the Pizarro Isles, which would bring them into Porto Quyaba near ten o'clock.' She again sought out the captain for an explanation. He beamed ingratiatingly with his detestable simian smirk, and told her why. A wireless message had come from H. M. S. *Sudan*, via the *Manchester*, a British freighter, instructing the *La Palma* to avoid the Esperanza Passage. He showed her the paper with the message transcribed upon it. He shrugged his shoulders with sympathy for her and smirked his apish smirk again as she handed it back to him. She shrugged her own shoulders hopelessly, and wished that she had the recklessness to kill him.

A distant storm, a nightly affair in that region and that season, was announcing itself in the southwest. Evening came quickly down, with additional darkness from the storm-clouds. She stood by the after cabin and considered the situation with forced coolness.

The faint crackling of the wireless sounded down to her. She listened to it as though it could tell her something.

She knew they would not be sending radios to Porto Quyaba, because the most powerful stations there were on the roof of the presidential palace and on de Neyra's grounds on the Hill of Palms. Why, in all probability they would be sending no wireless out at all, now that they were within range of Porto Quyaba, unless it was in code. But that was unlikely. Then all that tickling and clattering up there was more faking.

SHE walked slowly away from the after cabin and round the deck to her own room. She sat down and wrote on the back of an envelope. She put the envelope into one of her suit pockets, got up, opened her traveling bag, extracted something from the bottom of it and put it into the other pocket. She sauntered out on deck again.

Llereno was waiting for her. She sent him for Calderon, and then despatched the latter to engage the captain and the quartermaster in conversation up in the wheel-house, and again sent off Llereno to keep Cosio below deck if possible—to get him below deck on some plausible excuse if he were not there already. They questioned her, but she refused to tell what prompted this maneuvering. She waited until Calderon put his hand out of the wheel-house and carelessly fluttered a white handkerchief. Davilla Cantu and the quartermaster were safely there. A moment later she saw Llereno and Cosio come round the deck toward the stern and disappear through the door of the companionway.

She thrust her hands into her coat pocket and walked quickly away from the railing and ascended the ladder to the upper deck. The wireless was crackling merrily. The sadly humorous Mexican was evidently having the time of his life doing nothing—unless he were actually sending and receiving in code. Code! She closed her finger over the envelope in her pocket. The next moment she had swiftly crossed to the wireless-room and was inside the door. The Mexican's long legs came down from his littered table with a bang.

"*Señorita!*" he said.

"*Señor*," she answered sweetly, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"*Si, señorita?*"

"I wish you to send this for me at once." She smoothed the crumpled envelope out in front of him. "I shall read it to you.

"It will be necessary to build a new government quay if Porto Quyaba desires the trade of the world. Big ships do not find the proper unloading accommodations here now, I have been told by a responsible representative of a large corporation of North America."

"But, *señorita*, there are fixed rules—" began the operator and stopped.

Where he had been only confronting a soft-voiced *señorita* a moment before, he was now confronting a small pearl-handled revolver in a little white, determined-looking hand.

"*No hay reglas fixas!* There are no fixed rules, *señor!*" said Delicios quietly. "I understand the sending of messages. You will please do as I command."

A minute later a message was winging itself across the Caribbean to the operators on the presidential-palace roof and on the Hill of Palms informing the President of Vengentina that if he desired to advance the economic prosperity of his country in general and Porto Quyaba in particular, he should take the advice of a responsible American corporation and build a new government quay.

"Now, *señor*," said Delicios, putting

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away her revolver and laying out five crisp bills on the table, "here are fifty dollars. My memory is as short as the time it takes to send such a message. No one need know that a fixed rule cannot sometimes be broken."

She turned and calmly left the befuddled Mexican to himself. She wandered over to the wheel-house and joined the group there. The message she had sent was a message she remembered that her father had once received from the elder Carte by courier and which had averted what threatened to be the most serious of the early rebellions against de Neyra.

Decoded, it was:

> Ammunition will be unloaded at the governmental quay to-night and your enemies will be there to receive it. Your most faithful friends are to be prevented from joining you, as my source of information positively informs me that they are watched closely.

Yet, even so, the elder Carte had found a way to join de Neyra. In her mind there was but a single thought now: Where was his son?

They left the captain, who was obviously puzzled at this abundance of company, and she stood at the railing on the deck discussing and rediscussing every angle of their plans with Calderon and Llereno, who presently joined them, still mystified at the commission she had asked him to fill, but she explained nothing. The discussion went on after dinner was over, like a groping-about in a black labyrinth, in some corner of which a bomb has been placed, timed to explode after a certain number of minutes.

Inside the former cabin of the second mate, Pedro Cosio, Messrs. Pearson and Squires, alias Kenyon and Chaffee, were playing stud minus the two extra cards, which Mr. Kenyon decided injected too much jazz into that amiable pastime. His luck or skill was not good, however, and the last pot he had lost alone would have bought a tidy parcel of munitions for Vengentina or any other restless nation. Still, by and large, he was accepting the trend of fate optimistically—first, because, with the momentary impending of events about to effect the realization of his years of plotting, he required some sort of mental opiate to keep himself from drink, song or dance, any one of which would have been undignified and hazardous, and, second, because he was already thinking in terms of the El Dorado awaiting him along the Rio Madagalpa. So what were a few desultory thousands between friends?

And then the *La Palma* stopped just inside the entrance to Porto Quyaba harbor.

THE harbor was utterly black, black even for Porto Quyaba. A light breeze, ebbing out of the storm-center, churned the water into choppy lather unable to hold the reflection of the stars. The latter themselves were dim and untropical through the faint mistiness of finely spread spray driving ahead of the storm that was beating for land. Along the southern horizon lightning occasionally flashed.

Beyond the darkness of the harbor, Porto Quyaba lay hidden, identified with obscurity except for a few lights widely scattered, which located for those who knew the little capital the presidential palace, the Campo de Publico, the National Theatre, the Hôtel Paris and a few other landmarks. There was a single pin-point of light over on the Holy Virgin Lighthouse to the right, but the station of the officer of Health, as the quarantine depot of the bay was personally designated, was unilluminated; and even the single harbor defense, the Punta Puesca, a combination fortress and church as solid as the Middle Ages and as modern, was feebly indicated by three or four weak blobs of illumination. It was all silent and black, and for the eve of July twentieth, the Day of Liberation, it was forebodingly silent and black. Something was impending behind that gloom.

A slightly sturdier illumination did place the home of the *presidente* on the Hill of Palms, and so far beyond this that the eye could hardly perceive it, a light-bluish blur, which, however, gave a still more aggressive effect, placed the military *quartel*, or barracks, of the Federal Troop, the headquarters of Juan Carozal.

The five Vengentinians found their eyes drawn irresistibly to that faint gray blur beyond the hotel, theatre and palace-lights and the lights on the Hill of Palms. Back of the blur itself they knew lay the arsenal and the sprawling plastered buildings of the War Department surrounding the national drill-ground, and the same thought came to each of them: Twenty hours away, across river, range and swamp,

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outside the little sea-town of Salcedo, lay their own faithful troop, impatiently waiting for them, gradually losing faith in them with that volatile Latin-American susceptibility to suspicion which is readiness to believe in just one more betrayal. And there in Salcedo lay de Neyra's sole hope of continuance in office and stabilizing life in Vengentina.

Suddenly from the wheel-house over them shot a long pure-white lance of light. It remained tilted against the depth of blackness of the harbor-front for almost half a minute, bringing out with startling clearness the government quay and the long brown-and-red warehouses of the Pan-American Loading Company, and just touching the edge of the corrugated iron sheds of P. W. Brill & Co. The light was as suddenly extinguished, and there followed a half-minute of intenser blackness. Then it flashed forth three times in staccato, paused for a second half-minute and again flung itself at the shore and held itself there, a pure-white, ominous finger in the night, for a another half-minute.

It had hardly withdrawn itself for the last time when a rocket flared up out of the most impenetrable pocket of gloom in the entire bay, at the extreme left, about a mile east of the old Carte residence. It was answered by a rocket on the other side, from Zacapa Point, almost directly opposite them. Far in the distance, behind Porto Quyaba, a brilliant fan-spread of light rose from the barracks of the Federal Troop. Then darkness—increased darkness and mammoth silence.

AHEAD and to the right of them came a faint stir of a vessel swirling through the choppy waters toward the *La Palma*. They descried three tiny lights moving quickly at them. Then abruptly there burst forth a rapid play of approaching green-white, red and yellow lights, that danced nearer and nearer.

"Fireworks and everything—what? Do they receive every incoming ship this way in this interesting land?" said a voice in Delicios's ear.

She turned, startled. It was the extraordinarily thin and cadaverous attendant of the invalid who had taken the second-mate's cabin.

"Or is it only because the beautiful daughter of the *presidente* is coming home?" He chuckled with callous familiarity.

Delicios turned quickly to her companions.

"*Señores*, do you know this *señor?*" she demanded.

Llereno glared at the gray-whiskered, attenuated man before him.

"I do not!" He bridled with instantaneous jealousy. "What do you wish, *señor?*"

"Little enough, *señor!*" chuckled Chaffee imperturbably, bowing. "The little lights are pretty—what?" Again he bowed his ridiculous height and withdrew.

Llereno made a quick step after him, but Delicios's hand on his arm checked him. He turned to say something, but the others' premonition of disaster was wakened by the search-light and the rockets, and their fascination in the visual patter of the colored lights on the oncoming boat, which was almost within hailing-distance of them now, gave him no audience. For the time being, Chaffee, in all his fantastic extension of frame, was forgotten. The colored lights abruptly ceased to be.

"Is this the *La Palma?*" a voice hailed in Spanish from the darkness.

"Capitano Davilla Cantu," responded a hoarse voice cryptically from the bridge above them.

The other boat passed them within fifty feet. For a moment it seemed as though its four dim lights fore and aft had slowed down almost to stopping. There was a hoarse interchange of terse shouts and a fall of something which sounded like a hawser or painter flung into the bottom of a smaller boat. Immediately came a gruff chug-chugging, and at the same time a dim lantern flickered into a glow close to the water in the wake of the other boat. They saw the four faint loftier lights of the vessel which had hailed the *La Palma* begin to swing with it in a wide circle back to the center shore. The next moment a dull impact on the side of the *La Palma* and the cessation of the diminutive gruff engine indicated that the smaller boat had reached them. The three Vengentinians hurried round to the side where the boat had fastened itself and looked over.

"It is the president's launch! I recognized it even out there!" exclaimed Delicios. "Who are those men? Have you ever seen them? They are not Vengentinians!"

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A motley half-dozen of the cutthroat derelicts which Chaffee had gathered in Havana and put aboard the *Condor*—which was the boat which had just hailed them and put back to shore—were looking up at them with a unanimous evil grin. Three of them under the command of a lanky barefooted individual in a crushed and soiled ship-officer's cap, a torn, collarless shirt and a filthy pair of duck trousers came like monkeys up the rope ladder thrown to them and disappeared like rats in a nightmare in an opening underneath Delicios and her companions.

"What—what has happened?" Calderon voiced the query which was holding Delicios in a vise of terror.

A HEAVY tramp of feet on the deck-planks behind them brought them face-about. Cosio with seven men stood there. Three of them were the men who just came aboard; one of the others was the seaman whom Delicios had encountered in the storeroom, his cheek swollen almost entirely over his right eye and a bandage round his head, and with him was another ruffianly prize from the crew of the *La Palma*. The remaining two, besides Cosio, were the fat invalid who had come aboard in New York and occupied the cabin of the second mate, and his macilent attendant.

"*Señorita* and *señores*, the captain requests that you get your belongings and accompany me to shore at once," announced Cosio, trying to look them all in the eyes at once, but irresistibly permitting his little pig-eyes to hover over the features of Delicios. Cosio plainly relished his mission. Llereno pushed between him and Delicios.

"How dare you instruct us what we are to do or not to do?" he cried. "Who is your captain that he can command his passengers as though they were coal-shovelers! You miserable—" Delicios's hand touched his arm and checked him.

"Ramon, there is a sensible procedure even in adversity," she said sharply. "Señor Mate," she addressed Cosio, "we demand to speak with the captain."

Cosio hesitated for a moment. Chaffee touched the shoulders of the seaman she had encountered in the storeroom and whispered something in his ear. He departed instantly. For a minute, seemingly dragging into hours for her, the two groups regarded each other in suspended silence.

She turned quickly as she heard the steps of the captain approaching. He was beaming with the eternal simpering benevolence and monumental self-assurance which made him look like an ape, and goaded her impulses toward murder. In his hand was the inevitable yellow paper. As he extended it toward her, she thought she would scream. She controlled herself and permitted her fingers to take it. Slowly, seemingly of its own accord, it crumpled in her hand and her fist formed over it.

"I understand, Captain Cantu. It is by the order of the British Admiralty, received just a moment ago by the wireless operator of the *La Palma*, that we are ordered to shore under these circumstances and with these escorts, formed partly, I presume, of British seamen and specialists in the courses of drifting German mines."

She indicated the three men who had come out of the president's launch and Chaffee and Kenyon, and turned to her own companions.

"*Señores*, the captain of a steamer flying the flag of a responsible nation has seen fit to do this. If Vengentina cannot protect her own, the solution of our difficulties seems to me to lie with that British navy itself which took such an interest in our voyage. *Señores*, we have been told what we must do. Let us do it!"

She turned and walked round to her cabin, followed by Llereno and Calderon, each of whom was escorted by two men. Cosio himself followed her to her door.

"*Señorita*," he addressed her there, with an awkward exactness of speech, "it is the explicit instructions of the captain that anything in the nature of firearms, which may inadvertantly have found themselves among your effects, must be left with him for safekeeping."

She turned on him, livid with fury and stung into an almost uncontrollable anger, not by what he said but by the lecherous undertone in his voice.

"You unspeakable beast!" she exclaimed, and flung the door shut in his face.

Without an instant's hesitation the tough-skinned Cosio set his shoulders to the door and snapped it off its lock with an almost gentle yet inevitable heave of his vast shoulders. As she saw the door come in at her in front of that unwithstandable

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primitive pressure, she realized the futility of pitting her force against his and the odds behind him.

White-faced beyond even the natural pale clarity of her features, her lips pressed in a thin, desperate line, she merely stood confronting him the second time, holding him back by something in her eyes spiritually as powerful as his appalling strength.

"It is by the captain's orders, *señorita*. that I must watch," inserted Cosio, breathing a little harder with excitement.

She had only two bags, which had practically been packed since morning, when she still believed they were bound for Salcedo, and in a moment she had stuffed the few of her belongings lying about into one of them. She opened the other and drew from it the small pearl-handled revolver, which she flung on the bed.

"The indignity of a search, I presume, I shall be able to forego, now that I have given up this," she said.

She ignored his hand stretched out toward her luggage, and strode ahead of him toward the rope ladder which led to her father's official launch.

CALDERON and Llereno were already there with Kenyon and the captain beside them. She looked in vain for the first mate.

"Señor Captain, I desire to speak to the first mate," she demanded tersely of Cantu. The captain shrugged his shoulders deprecatingly.

"*Ay, señorita!*" he said. "It is sad. The poor fellow is so terribly ill. We only pray that he has not the fever. But we must keep him apart—is it not so?—and hope for the best. It is plain that he can see no one."

She regarded him with a deliberate, analyzing scrutiny.

"His illness, too—I presume it is by order of the British Admiralty transmitted by wireless, Captain?" she said quietly, and turned from him.

Kenyon went down into the launch first, swaying like a monstrous and loathsome insect on the rope ladder. Calderon was about to follow him when he was stopped by a cry from Delicios which carried over the whole boat. As though rooted to the spot, she stood extending forth her arms toward a staggering, cramp-crippled figure pushed toward them by Chaffee.

"Russell! What have they done to you?" she cried, and started toward him.

From one side Cosio gripped her arm and pulled her back ungently; from the other side Llereno grasped her wrist.

"You stay there!" ordered Cosio.

"Can't you see?" whispered Llereno, almost exultant in his insane jealousy. "He is shamming now. He betrayed you."

Chaffee gripped Carte's shoulder and held him as he was about to fall on the deck. His legs and arms were as numb as frozen flesh, and the seeping of blood into his rigid limbs set his head swirling.

"Just a word of advice, dear," whispered Chaffee in his ear; "before you join that bunch over there. You are going in the launch with them to shore—what? From time to time little ideas on the subject of independent action, as you call it, will creep into your bright young head. Resist 'em! As sure as there's a God-forsaken dump of guineas and niggers called Vengentina, I'll shoot, Carte—you know me!"

Carte's shoulders stiffened, as much against his swinging legs and reeling brain as against the other's words.

"I know you," he whispered through slipping teeth. "I know what you did to your own gang in Peru."

"Then you know too much, and I'll remember it," hissed Chaffee, coming still closer to his ear and digging his long, steel-wired fingers into his arm. "But you don't know this, kid: I'll not shoot you. I'll aim at that good-looking girl over there."

Carte's heart dropped like a gull with a simultaneous swoop of his head, which was almost swooning. Yet in the midst of the vertigo which caught him as though in the bottom of a huge, inverted cone and spun him crazily round, he did not doubt Chaffee for a moment. Chaffee let go his arm, and he fell on his knees and would have crashed head foremost on the deck-planks if he had not been caught by one who was almost, though not quite, as palsied with confinement and checked circulation as himself.

It was Markey, hauled from the remotest and filthiest corner of the forecastle by another of Cosio's picked scoundrels.

Markey, however, had been untied more than three hours before in the forecastle by Cosio himself, following orders from Chaffee, who at first had some intention of putting him through a third degree for any

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information concerning the plans of de Neyra's party which he himself had not already gathered in. He had abandoned the idea, however, and Cosio having been suddenly called away before he could re-tie him, it was considered that Markey, crippled by the tying-up he had already suffered, could be easily enough guarded by one of the crew. Those three hours, as trifles have a unique way of doing, were to have their part, too, in the history of Vengentina and every person aboard the boat.

Half stumbling and swaying over Carte, and exhibiting a doddering feebleness not altogether compatible with the physical respite he had gained since he was untied, Markey lifted up his friend, and they both swayed dizzily on the deck-planks before Chaffee regripped Carte's arm and the seaman who was guarding Markey lent a hand to support him. Markey shook the hand off drunkenly, and lurched against him. The half-caste Central American grinned and gave him a genial shove which sent him gyrating through six or seven fandango-steps and roused an elated guffaw from every one save Delicios and her companions, Chaffee and the semiconscious Carte. Markey flexed himself into a ridiculously insecure standing posture directly in front of the seaman who had guarded Carte in the storeroom. Further to promote the humorous appreciation of the audience, this cavalier of the puffed eye and swathed brow clutched him by the shoulders and turned him right-about for another shove back at his custodian. But something happened before that shove was into execution.

Markey counterspun of his own tion, his right arm half bent and His fist drove against the sailor's ja all the force of his turn and his torso. It looked like the lucky s an intoxicated roisterer. Addition ment was on the point of rising as t a wretched scarecrow of humanit from the punishment he had suf Cosio's hands in the storeroom noon, dropped like an unweigh dummy. But the merriment off instantly. Markey was da mad bull at Davilla Cantu, wh yards away in the center of th connecting the two sides of t bowled over the captain as t

bull would have rammed an ape out of his way, and the next moment he was over the railing on the opposite side of the ship. *Splash!*

IT HAPPENED so quickly that for a pause not a soul moved. Then the seaman who had guarded him and two of Chaffee's hired ruffians, followed by the entire group and the captain, who had resurrected himself and was bellowing heinously athwart the night, rushed to the railing over which Markey had dived, and began firing blindly into the water.

"You damned fools—stop it! He's done for! Haven't you got sense enough to see that, you swine, without waking the whole rotten country?" shouted Chaffee, who had come up with a suddenly revivified Carte propelled mercilessly in front of him by a prodding automatic. He gripped the captain's arm and shook him savagely. "Shut up!" he snapped, without ceremony. "And you—there!" He released Carte's arm and swung his fist viciously against the jaw of Markey's guard. "You blasted scum, you'll keep your wits about you now and follow orders—and so will every one else!"

Buccaneer that he was, his whole unsavory, bloodthirsty reputation confronted the devilish handful of professional blackguards he had collected with an ominous threat before which each and every one of them quailed.

He dug his automatic into Carte's back.

"That ends your side-kick! He pulled off his diving-taxi stunt once too much!" he hissed fiendishly into Carte's ear.

"Spindleshanks!" Carte half-turned his head and whispered back at him, immense hope driving pain out of his tortured limbs despite the logic of Chaffee's words. "That night-diving act is something George can do in his sleep. You wouldn't even have to untie him, either, for him to get away with it."

"If he does, he can have my share of the Madagalpa tract without a struggle. That's what I'm willing to bet him and daylight don't meet no more."

"You're a naughty gambler!" lisped Carte.

The *La Palma's* search-light was cast for a moment on the waters round the ship, and the whole party stared into the soapy swirl of the bay for about five minutes

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longer, but no sign of Markey was seen.

"A damned considerate guy, I calls him!" said Chaffee finally, with restored good humor, and led the way to the rope ladder again.

They clambered down into the presidential launch one after the other. Chaffee seated himself at the stern, with Carte facing ahead, directly in front of him, and directly in front of Carte he ordered Delicios to sit, also facing the bow. The purpose of this arrangement Carte well understood, and he had no doubt whatever that Chaffee's vow to aim at Delicios if he should make a move would be implacably carried out by that lean desperado of fortune.

AS THEY chugged away from the *La Palma* they heard her anchor being hoisted, and a few minutes later the vessel began to move toward the shore, and twenty minutes later she warped into the government quay. In that space the main- and fore-hatches had been opened and the winches were already humming and creaking at lifting the cargo.

Alongside of the dilapidated, tumbledown pier built solidly enough originally of stone and timber, a few miles northeast of the Hill of Palms, and near the evil waterfront settlement of El Vigia, the launch of the *presidente* came to a stop. Delicios, Carte and their companions were ordered up, and the whole party, with the exception of the barefooted thieves' corporal in the crushed ship-officer's cap and two of his men, stumbled to land across the treacherous surface of the old jetty, aided, fortunately, by a few flashes of lightning. They crossed a clinging belt of sand to the firm ground of the *camino real*, which was practically at its best and hardest here. The plans of their captors had been worked out with an exactitude that met no hitch. They were marched along the broad curving road until they were almost behind the president's palely agleam house on the Hill of Palms which rose beyond its own outlying fields and a nearer and shorter hill over the field that skirted the road. Suddenly they were stopped. There was a blunt and fairly high outcropping ledge here, round which the road bent toward the southwest. Two men stepped from under its ponderous shadow. A flash-light shone out and was extinguished instantly. In that brief flash Carte had recognized one of the men. It was José Garanullos, the son of the planter.

There was a short whispered consultation between him, Kenyon and Chaffee, who had put an extra man at Carte's side and beside Delicios. Two minutes later Kenyon and the man who had met them with Garanullos walked back to the thick shadow under the overhanging ledge, and Carte heard the scraping of horses' hoofs. They were off instantly, the hoof-beats drumming hollowly on the firm highway until their breakneck pace bore them out of hearing.

A grim smile crossed Carte's face as he pictured Kenyon, corpulent, out of condition, keeping up that murderous pace at night over even the prime highway of Vengentina.

A familiar grip fitted itself like a bracelet round his right arm. It was Chaffee.

"Carte, another little word," he said in a low voice that was not too low for every one who knew English there to understand. "We're in the country you know, and near her father's house. I've given my flash-light to a man ahead there with instructions to throw it on the young lady's back at regular intervals, and to hold it there in case o' the slightest rumpus. I'm a d[illegible] good shot, Carte, and you know it!"

With Garanullos at the h[illegible] Chaffee's men in front a[illegible] Vengentinian, and Ch[illegible] and Carte, the process[illegible] ingle file for a time o[illegible] narrow cattle-roads of [illegible] came into the *cam*[illegible] Cuguagua, San Fer[illegible]orto Padre, and ten hours' [illegible]nd that from Salcedo. They le[illegible]d crossed a stretch of tangled fields by way of a rutty path, ankle-deep in sand at best, knee-deep in mud and warm, stagnant water at worst. Finally the path rose a few feet to firmer going, and they began to wind up continuously over rocks and loose earth. On and on they climbed, led by Garanullos. Carte recognized, even in the dark, the course which they were taking. It led toward one corner of Vasco Garanullos's vast *estancia*, which lay across the greater portion of Vengentina.

It must have been near midnight when they brought up suddenly before an opaque greater blackness than the obscurity through which they had been passing.

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Ahead, horses whinnied and stamped. Carte heard a sound of a key thrust into a lock and a door opening. After a tense pause a light shone out in front of them, and then three others, tracing a long, low building through doorway and windows. They moved forward into the structure, which he knew must be one of the Garanullos range-stations.

It was a long wooden shed, with a packed dirt floor and contained harness, saddles, rolls of barbed wire, odds and ends of farming implements, and a general horsy, weathered-leather and cattle-yard smell. In one end was a rough collection of bunks; in the other an arrangement of objects which suggested the occurrence of cookery there. Just outside the great open sliding doors, directly opposite the door which they had entered, stood three beautiful saddled, restive horses. An alert dark-brown old *gaucho*, a rifle across his knees, sat motionless before them.

Carte and the others, with the exception of Delicios, were led to the end of the room adorned by the untidy sleeping-quarters of Garanullos's *gauchos*. Cosio, following whispered instructions from Chaffee, took Delicios to the opposite end. A second *gaucho* silently entered at a call from Garanullos and barricaded the windows and the door through which they had come. He went out again and pushed the great double sliding doors together within a foot of joining. Chaffee drew Garanullos aside. They whispered together for e and called over one of the thre f the *Condor's* crew. They seeme estion him. He nodded, and then ut to the horses. Garanullos follow , and Chaffee strode over to Cosio sailor ostentatiously drew out a w long revolver as though in response tever Chaffee said to him, and wave sively first at the three men who nder guard at the other end of t and then, with a mockingly regr rish, at Delicios. Chaffee nodde satis-faction and crossed the other d in-structed the remaining two s f the *Condor* apart, after which he ished three of the lanterns and dimm ourth with a handkerchief. The lo now stretched itself indefinitely t end through cavernous shadows. dark-brown old *gaucho* and the one who had barricaded the windows came silently in and took places at each door. Chaffee passed through the foot-crack of the door without touching it. The old *gaucho* closed it behind him and slung a bar across it. The sound of a similar bar dropping into place on the outside came into the shed. The commotion of men mounting horses penetrated within and a snapped interchange of curt, indistinguishable phrases of command. Burst out a spontaneous clap of gallop, which broke into a thunderous disharmony of hoofs until the horses caught their full stride and fell into a steady drumming progress that quickly died away in the night, and silence was again supreme without.

IN THE shed, Carte at one end, Delicios at the other kept on listening intently—straining every auditory nerve out into the night beyond the walls which confined them. The storm had seemingly progressed no farther in its uncouth flirting with Porto Quyaba. Intermittent claps of thunder shivered toward them from out at sea and from due south. A pioneer drop of rain flopped on the shed's roof. Another. No others followed. If anything, the general trend of the distant storm was weakening. It was some local island affair, and seemed rather afraid of approaching Porto Quyaba with too great familiarity.

Carte sat up in the bunk he had been commanded to occupy, with heightened attention. In her corner, Delicios leaned forward. The next moment every one in the room was listening intently. The two thugs from the *Condor* who were guarding Carte and his companions moved nearer to the windows. Only the *gauchos* did not stir; head bent and arms folded over their rifles lying across their knees, they sat motionless, apparently asleep. But Carte knew that these half-breed cowboys with their traditional keenness of eye and ear must have heard that distant disturbance long before he had heard it. The sound was like a little cloud of gallop coming down from the hills to the northwest of the station, presumably along the edge of Garanullos's *estancia*. It swerved a little closer and louder and swept through the great range in an arc of sound round the shed, passing it on the south in the direction which Chaffee, José Garanullos and the

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sailor had taken. The noise, as it passed nearest to them on the south, broke into rattling and rumbling. They heard above it a sudden, thin hurrahing, as though the riders were sending them a contemptuous salutation. A detachment of the Federal Troop was riding down from the barracks, which were about three miles to the northwest of the shed.

"What time is it?" Carte asked Calderon.

One of the sailors scowled and moved at him. Calderon took out his watch.

"Five minutes after twelve."

"The Day of Liberation!" murmured Carte musingly.

The sailor shoved Carte prone on the dirty cot and turned and ripped the watch out of Calderon's hand.

"*Silencio!*" he spat, and coolly pocketed the timepiece.

THE sound of that passing dash of horsemen out of the old janizary headquarters of rebellion impressed itself on the minds of Delicios and the others as something like an audible vision of defeat. Even his watch in the pocket of Chaffee's professional vandal could not completely free Calderon's mind from the oppression placed on it by that sneering and victorious greeting sent them through the night. Hope ebbed out of him. In Llereno's single-track soul alone the eternal question which had tormented his hot blood so long predominated regardless. Besides his fanatical desire for Delicios he had but little, and that superficial, interest in Vengentinian politics. His code of honor was peculiar and oblique. It just prevented him from actually wishing that de Neyra would be displaced. Jealousy, which motivated nearly everything he did and felt, supported his code of honor here also. He knew of Juan Carozal's infatuation for Delicios. If Carozal became president—and the customary fate of ex-presidents seemed likely to overtake de Neyra—Carozal might play the magnanimous rôle toward the father of Delicios and secure a hold on her. Carozal's successes in love were notorious. Llereno pondered these matters egoistically, hardly affected by that which distressed his companions.

Only Carte and Delicios continued to listen, with a concentration that was an actual physical strain, in the direction of Porto Quyaba.

Presently there was a loose clamor of distant firing. It stopped and was followed by a continuous fusillade like popping corn. Carte almost forgot himself in his fervor of listening and half rose. The instant threat of the sailor nearest him kept him tightly to the bunk, however. The firing stopped. He clenched his hands.

"That's the *Condor* gang. They haven't got the *La Palma's* ammunition into play yet or they'd never stop," he murmured grimly to himself.

The firing was resumed at a still greater distance and from what might have been the other end of Porto Quyaba, near Bas Obispo. It grew furiously and began to cover more and more space, rousing even Calderon from his torpor of despondency and Llereno from egoistical meditations on his passion.

"That sounds like real fighting! That can't be just Carozal's troops!" ejaculated Calderon, rising in his excitement.

The guard thrust him back viciously.

"*Sacro Cristo!* Shut up, pig!"

"Good old Martinez must have had a few rounds left in the bank at that," decided Carte, after listening critically.

Above the popping of rifles, which h- again grown desultory, came an interr- hoarse bark.

"It is the Libertad!" cri- against the threat of the sa-"

They listened with n- .t was evident that Martin- erted tug armed with a f- .- bow—flagship of the V- .vy—was speaking. But -.? Carte, at least, had no -ins score.

"- -pirates have got anything, i- -.at they've got that scow," -imself.

was the least of his worries, however. -est any gunner in the world could do with that field-piece was to knock a hole either through one of the P. W. Brill & Co. sheds or rip off the roof of some innocent native's home and shake the old tug itself apart. After about eight shots the catarrhal cough of the field-piece ceased. But by that time the occupants of the shed had something new upon which to concentrate their attention.

A fresh burst of galloping reached them, coming nearer and nearer with a speed which, even for a Vengentinian *gaucho*, was

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no less than maniacal across those paths. It was evidently a single horseman, and the suicidal celerity of his approach blazoned ahead of him tidings of significance. Through the whole shed rang the furor of his arrival as he clattered up, clanging stones under his horse's feet and hurling a spray of gravel against the great double doors. The outside bar was flung off and a vehement pounding beat in on them. The *gaucho* threw up the bar and pushed the doors apart, and the newcomer shoved precipitously past him into the shed.

It was Juan Carozal.

HE HAD no hat; his sleek black hair was disheveled; his clothes were crumpled and caked with dirt above his waist, and below it dripping with water. He must have taken neither the bridge at Chalgres across the Rio Verde, from which direction he had come, nor crossed by way of the ford at Ojo Caliente, but swum his horse through it by a short cut.

In all the grotesque disarray of his usual immaculate self, the presidential aspirant of Vengentina stood there—an absurd combination of merman and mud-gnome. ound the shed he flung his prying, senti- l glance, his black eyes as ablaze with enchable fire of the rake as ever. ntly, at the end of the cavern- ou shadows and veiling light, he sa Neyra.

There se lofty public am- bitions are n over their private groveling tende ese men, too, like Ramon Llere an earth- quake or an Armage a Ven- gentinian revolution to their primitive and entirely pers s. Such a man was Juan Carozal.

He strode toward Delicios and, g half-way, drew himself up in his ni- soaked ridiculousness and threw out one hand toward her and the other upward.

"Juan Carozal!" he announced grandiloquently. "The President of Vengentina!"

"What!" shouted Carte involuntarily.

Carozal turned his head toward him. "*Pues si, señor*," he replied mockingly, making a deep bow. "Yes, if you please, *señor!*"

He turned again toward Delicios and leveled his finger at Cosio.

"Request Señorita de Neyra to come here!" he commanded, as Solomon in an ungentlemanly lapse might have commanded one of his minor wives to approach in order to bask for an interval in the shadow of his wisdom, and utterly unlike Juan Carozal's usually smooth and rakishly gallant demeanor. The man was drunk with a new sensation, power of a kind he never tasted before. From somewhere the dictum of the misogynist Nietzsche may have come to this lover of women—that man should approach woman with a whip, for he cracked the lash now.

His gesture and tone offended Delicios to the depths of her being, and it stung at least two others into an equal rage. Llereno sprang to his feet, unnoticed by the guards, who were wrapped in amazed interest at this half-drenched, half-dry marionette of a new president. Carte clenched his fist, leaned slightly forward, tense, poised.

Delicios hesitated for a moment, then came toward Carozal, pale, her lips pressed into a thin line, but with a self-possession and dignity that thrilled the American as nothing he could remember had ever thrilled him. Cosio was three steps behind her. When she stood almost before Carozal, the latter suddenly rocketed aloft in a swish and whirlwind of bombast. His monumental talent for eighteenth-century Castilian magniloquence never had attained the extravagance which his fresh ascension to power induced in him now.

"*Señorita*, I come to you in the spirit of my forebears, the old Spanish cavaliers, standing before you now as the president of great Vengentina, and not as the once-spurned and most humble suppliant of your beauteous consideration which I was when I was merely Captain Juan Carozal, of the Federal Troop of this sacred land—that which through dark hours and darker served as the exalted repository of the holy spirit of—eh"— he swallowed a bit for breath and a word—"aye; of the abiding and hallowed spirit of independence! And this day, on turning the invisible corner of midnight, burgeoned gloriously into a Day of Liberation, *señorita* and *señores*, such as our sublime country hath ne'er seen since the first and baptismal twentieth day of July—nay, nay!—more gloriously than even that ever-and-ever-to-be-remembered day—blossomed forth with its sanctified tidings of deliverance!"

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He paused for another gulp of fuel.

Carte leaned forward, entranced.

"Lord! What a congressman he'd make!"

"I am all supreme in the faithfulness of my troops," resumed the orator of the day, "and in the consent and good will and overflowing exaltation of the populace, which greeted me with huzzas and flowers, even though it was past midnight. They shall have a six-day *fiesta* with a continuous band concert in the Campo de Publico, a free bull-fight, and four performances at the Teatro Nacional, at a charge of only fifty pesos, which, as you can see, is nothing at all, but will bring in something for the most beloved poor of the Holy Mother, and will be indicative of the magnanimous and transcendent manner in which I shall rule our country! Indeed, *señorita*, there were cries to-night: '*Vivo* Juan Carozal, King of Vengentina!'—but I think I shall decline this all but compelling popular appeal, the unostentatious rôle of president becoming our times better. My troops have cleared everything before them. They have stormed the palace of the *presidente* and occupied the Teatro Nacional and the National Printing Office, and already thousands upon thousands of new bank-notes have been printed. They have entered the Chamber of Delegates and taken possession of the café of the Hôtel Paris, as well as of other restaurants, and ordered the chefs and waiters back to duty, and they are now dispensing free refreshments, and joy reigns supreme and the universal exaltation is increasing every moment. My valiant regiments have surrounded the home of the former president, *señorita*, who has been traitor to the best interests of my revered Vengentina, and has suffered the just disfavor of the populace. He it is who has been taken prisoner, and he is confined, awaiting trial—a fair trial insisted upon, *señorita*, by my explicit orders, despite the sentiments for summary justice to be meted out to him raging so high that it could be stemmed by me alone—in a room in the Hôtel Paris directly over the café, whence he can hear the rising of pæans of triumph from the rejoicing multitudes of Porto Quyaba iterating and reiterating in heaven-ascending hosannas of delight with their heartfelt approbation of *my triumph!*"

"Wow!" breathed Carte. "Go to it, boy! I was wrong. You belong in the Senate. But if you can write like you can talk, you could run the United States long enough to sit in on a treaty of peace!"

"*Señorita*, the outcome of this trial depends upon you. *Senorita*, I offer you my hand and your father's life. Refuse them—Nay; but, *señorita*, I did not come to you as one——"

NEITHER the kind of one which Carozal did not come to her as, nor the kind of one which Carozal did come to her as, was ever discovered by Delicios or any one else in the shed.

An insanely infuriated man hurled himself forward past the *gauchos* and the guards from the crew of the *Condor* set to watch him and his companions, brushing two of them aside like overripe corn-stalks, and pounced on Carozal's back like a famished mountain-cat come down-country to kill. Llereno's fingers and nails sank venomously into the new president's neck, and his legs wrapped themselves round the puffy body of the eloquent son of the old Spanish cavaliers. Both of them went down and over, fighting ferociously. Cosio drew Delicios rapidly back to the end of the shed; one of the *gauchos* and the sailor whom Llerno had bowled over drew knives and hovered above the entangled combatants threshing over the stamped-down earth floor in an agony of mad, murderous lust and lusty, mad self-defense.

The other guard and *gaucho* confronted Carte and Calderon with leveled rifle and revolver. The last had risen, excited beyond fear; only Carte, intense, coldly self-possessed, remained sitting and leaning for- w[illegible]mingly watching the complicated st[illegible]n the floor and the futile efforts of [illegible]*ucho* and the sailor to catch the ro[illegible]uging, biting, gasping battlers in a[illegible] static enough to permit them eit[illegible]ar Llereno off from the oratorical pre[illegible]r to stick a knife into him.

l[illegible]e was not watching that. All his[illegible] were concentrated on his hearing, [illegible]lone of all there heard new mad gall[illegible] at was almost at the doors of the[illegible]ust before it reached the doors, the[illegible] last drove home an effective kick[illegible] Llereno after a few tentative trials[illegible] had miscarried about and arou[illegible]s parts of the anatomy of

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the new President of Vengentina. The next instant he and the *gauchos* had torn the devastated suitors of Delicios apart.

Battered, semistrangled and generally inconvenienced though he was, there was still a thread of voice-passage left in the new president's official larynx by way of which his inexhaustible reserve of oratory could trickle forth to the patient world. He struggled to his feet but fell back on his knees. With one hand over his left eye and the other clasping his semiperforated Adam's-apple, he gurgled and guggled inarticulately:

"Ay! Gr-wrrrggg-grrup—*Dios!* Rrramon Llllll'r'r'r-no!—*Camarrrradddas!* Gggr-ipj the traitor! Grrr-wrrrgg!" With a final gurgle he attained a heroic clarity of expression. "He had attacked the President of Vengentina!" announced Carozal. He gurgled again and with a crowning supergurgle achieved the articulate.

IT WAS at this point that the rider dismounted without the great doors, and now every one in the shed save Carozal heard him.

"Señorita de Neyra, come here and pledge me your hand! Every one in this room!" screamed the assaulted executive, in a mania to reestablish his dignity by some heroic gesture. "Attention! Rise and salute your president——"

A terrific kick from a foot at the end of a leg that was four feet long caught the President of Vengentina in the orthodox location of the satisfactorily executed appulse from a pedal extremity, and Juan Carozal departed, head over heels, from the center of the stage that was held now by a ferociously altered Chaffee, who had also detoured neither to bridge nor [illegible]nd whose long legs dripped with t[illegible]rs of Rio Verde through which he [illegible]m his horse.

He was coatless and hatless, [illegible]rt incrusted in perspiration splotche[illegible]id face with yellow streaks, like dau[illegible]r- paint. Yet there was nothing [illegible]is about Elias Chaffee at that mon[illegible]is pale-blue eyes glittered with th[illegible]er balefulness for which his wrath w[illegible]is from Montevideo to Juarez.

"The president of this dun[illegible]of niggers and greasers is José C[illegible]s, you damned woman-yapping *mes*[illegible]t Chaffee, giving vent to the most terrific insult he could have found against the light-skinned scion of the old Spanish cavaliers. "You fly-by-night, skirt-crazy guinea—get out! I haven't time to kill you. You've gummed yourself, but if you've gummed me along with you, hide yourself in the bottom of that bay out there, because that's the only place I won't look for you!"

He turned and came on Carte like an avenging demon. He gripped his shoulders and brought him up with a dexterity of strength with which Carte had never credited him. He dropped one hand, swung it back and drove it, open, against the American with all his force. The percussion of it flung Carte back and down. He groped forward at Chaffee blindly, unthinking of his own position and of everything but to strike back. Chaffee's hand, gripping the shirt and muscles of his chest together, and holding him at the length of his long arm, did not stop him; but the automatic Chaffee now held in his other hand did.

"You— What did you do with the rifles that were supposed to be on the *La Palma?* I give you a minute!"

Carte's lips shut tight, then opened and regarded Chaffee with the twinkle of old humor back in his eyes.

"Old Isthmus," he answered sweetly, "when the cuckoo chimes at daybreak, let us sing a roundelay."

The automatic in front of him tilted into an absolutely tremorless grip. Eye for eye they regarded each other. Chaffee calmly took his hand from Carte's chest.

"Did your old man ever tell you any stories about the only tribe of Indians in the world that loved their women folk better than themselves—down below here in the background of Bolivia—what?" asked Chaffee pleasantly and waited.

Inside the younger man an icy fear shivered into a quickly congealing horror. He remembered a story his father had told of the tribe which punished a man by tying him and in his presence bastinadoing his mate, who was suspended by her ankles over an opening too deep for her to rest her hands on. Chaffee raised his right hand slowly.

"There was a President of Vengentina who had a daughter, and she was young and good to look at—what? So ran a story—" Chaffee stopped suddenly.

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Carte tore his eyes from him and slowly turned his head, drawn from the inhuman significance of what the thin killer was about to say to something else. His ears caught it beyond the echoing horror of Chaffee's words. From Porto Quyaba there had come a solid and unceasing firing, which increased every instant. Faint at first—as Chaffee, arm still extended, waited minute after minute listening to it—it grew steadily clearer and nearer, as though creeping through Porto Quyaba from the southeast and west, and was suddenly added to by a loud burst from the northeastern outskirts of the town, and again by a fresh addition from a nearer point southwest—the point nearest them.

Carte threw his arms above his head.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "Chaffee—listen, you devil; listen! The polls were kept open late because the voting became unexpectedly heavy. I'll tell you where those guns are you're so damned anxious to locate. Ride right down into the heart of Porto Quyaba and you'll find 'em in the hands of about two thousand little brown lads that wouldn't listen to Kenyon's palaver. God bless their little white hearts, they're better men then you are, lump of sin! Old Skaars Hasvik in the *Skudenshavn* brought 'em here right past your nose!"

Chaffee turned to him. His face was contorted with something beyond rage.

"Wait, kid!" he shouted, pointing his automatic at Carte, half turning and stretching out his other hand toward the opposite end of the room. "We're playing this with a joker, and I've got it. Cosio, bring her here!"

Carte's flesh crawled again with that sudden cold contraction.

"My God, Chaffee, you won't do that?"

"I won't—what? But I will—unless I get copper-riveted guarantees here and now that I won't lose a peso of the thing that I went into this for— Cosio," he repeated ferociously, "bring her here!"

The long shed was still as though petrified by the brutality of his intention. Only Llereno moved between the *gaucho* and the sailor, who twisted his arms back of him.

"Cosio!" shouted Chaffee for the third time.

There was no answer. He glared at the other end of the room, squinting to penetrate the gloom of it. The fingers of his free hand clenched and unclenched themselves nervously; the silence was deadly.

"Aim at him!" he snapped at the guard, indicating Carte.

He strode, the automatic held alert in front of him, toward the end where Cosio guarded Delicios. The corner window, behind a jutting mass of harness and blankets which screened it from the rest of the room, had been torn open. Cosio had fled with Delicios.

FOR a moment Chaffee stood there, the murderous cloud blacker on his face. A satanic laughter broke from the tall man, rolling hyenalike through the shed, clattering like a trumpet of irony against the mind and heart of every man who knew Delicios de Neyra—and Pedro Cosio.

"Wonderful!" roared Chaffee through his laughter. "Pedro Cosio's run off with her! Help yourselves, *camaradas!*" He strode toward the door. "Put up your guns!" he ordered the guards. "Aim!" he commanded, indicating Carte, Llereno and Calderon. "Hold it!" He backed toward the door, flourishing his automatic. He reached the door and deliberately raised his weapon at the single dimmed lantern. "When she goes out, *buenos amigos*, fire!" he said, w fiendish cold-bloodedness.

There was a double crack; t was out. Something scaldin bingly past Chaffee's h ag struck him sharply in t sillade ripped the shed ap stitching of death. Hal omething he hardly comp rocked on his feet and is horse. But the horse e. He stopped short, a walking befuddlement and a e nearly choking him. he muttered.

His own laughter came back out of the pit and rattled against his own teeth louder than the fusillade, which continued its chant of death in the shed, and the shrieks and cries and obscene cursing which raged in there, and the shouting of one vaguely familiar voice.

"Cosio!" he muttered almost sleepily, and pitched lengthwise, as though he had been kicked flat by a mule.

Some one darted out of the shed and stumbled over him, rose and kicked him viciously in the side. It was Llereno. His

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Delicios hesitated for a moment, then came toward Carozal, pale, her lips pressed into a thin line, but with a self-possession and dignity that thrilled the American.

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hands were sticky with something whose redness the darkness concealed. Another man dashed through the door.

"George! Here!" he shouted.

Llereno turned and grappled with him.

"Who is it?"

"Traitor!"

"Let go, Llereno—it's Carte!"

"Traitor!" gasped Llereno again, and fumbled for his neck.

Carte twisted from him and crashed his fists, one after the other, against his face. Llereno reeled and fell. Carte stumbled forward over him, and the next moment tripped over Chaffee.

"God—George!" he gulped.

His hands struck against a cylindrical object in the prostrate man's pockets. He took it out. It was a flash-light. He directed it down.

"Chaffee!" he murmured incredulously. "Dead!"

IN CONTRADICTION of the slander, a convulsive movement rippled through the stretched-out man in front of him. At the same instant some one else seized his shoulders from behind and twisted him round and to his feet.

"Russ! Great God—buddy, is it you?" came Markey's voice, hoarsened with excitement and emotion.

Carte gripped his two arms.

"You came on schedule, George."

"Russ, Porto Quyaba's——"

"The hell with Porto Quyaba and this whole damned nation! Have you seen Cosio or Delicios—man, tell me; have you seen them?"

"No—I got——"

"There's nothing else you can tell me—I've got to get a horse—come! There's another station—about a mile over there!"

He set out on a dash across the fields. Coolness of judgment returned to him. He had to conserve some vestige of his strength, and it was necessary for him to learn the nature of the events of the night, so that he should know what he would have to face, perhaps, later. Markey told him concisely.

"God! And I just broke a horse's leg before I got to that shack," he prefaced with a groan, pitching in and out of a ditch. "In a hole like this!"

He had been clinging to the anchor-cable of the *La Palma* while they were looking for him over the railing, climbed aboard later, stole back into the forecastle, changed into a dry shirt and trousers of one of the crew. He had learned before that the first mate was confined in the lazaret, reached it unseen, freed him. Coming out, they ran into the captain, knocked him on the head, locked him, in turn, in the lazaret. They got on the wharf just after the *La Palma* warped into the government quay. It was his idea to wait in hiding there until the rifles were unloaded and then attempt to do something—something desperate and forlorn perhaps—to render them useless. Kenyon was there. Some one whispered his name. It was the man whom Carte had despatched to Porto Quyaba via Jacksonville ahead of them.

Great Moses!

The van of an armed de Neyra army was on the way and already in Bas Obispo, the rest of it marching in from Santa Rita.

Carozal's men were shooting up the town with what ammunition they had left. Then— They found that the long boxes out of the *La Palma* marked "spades, barbed wire, phonographs" and so forth contained those things and nothing more!

Kenyon and Chaffee and the two Garanulloses were like wild men. Carozal had disappeared. Vasco Garanullos took a chance. The president's personal guard had been seduced away. T of what Carozal was going t collectively and individua n't desert de Neyra was : their nerves. They agre aranullos for president, a n beat it to round up a *uchos* and a detachment eral Troop, already celebr Hôtel Paris and elsewh oing to get hold of Estaban how. Then he could still d

ate got a mule-team and rattled t to Bas Obispo to hustle up the ar mself and the via-Jackson-ville cl k a leg in the direction of the Hil ns. They ran foul of one of the eig als of the Federal Troop—fat gu 's-his-name?—always a bit wabbly ozal. They gave him the situatic had heard about the fiasco of the Ie seemed sad, and open to argume y closed the deal.

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A half-hour later they had a pitched battle on the slopes of the Hill of Palms with Garanullos's men. It was a corps of Carozal's own Federal Troop which saved the president that night. Such was life in Vengentina.

Then he had copped a nag and rode with the other native—the other what's-his-name-via-Jacksonville — to rejoin him—Carte. Thought he was safe all along. Thought— Well, the guy with him was a good scout but a Vengentinian. A night's work's a night's work. Left him a mile down to go back. The road was clear ahead. Clear as hell! Couldn't budge him. He had to go back to celebrate. Deserved it! Admitted as much himself. He—Markey—kicked his nag on. Saw light ahead. Blooey! The fool horse dived into a ditch. Threshed round in it, and he couldn't get it to its feet. Shot it! He was no rider anyhow. Could handle a taxi, but horses—He got to the shed and heard Chaffee. "Go slow, George," he said to himself. But things went too quick. He was behind Chaffee just as he shot the light out. Just had time to get positions of the *gauchos* and the sailors from the *Condor*. Shot with Chaffee and thinks he winged one of the *gauchos*. Then crackled right past Chaffee's head at the other *gaucho* and the sailor, fast as he could pump the old piston, and put one into Chaffee's back—didn't aim to kill him outright at that. Aimed——

"And nowhere—sign of Delicios—or Cosio?"

"No."

"Faster!" said Carte. Th[illegible]ad come to a small muddy gulley. [illegible]floundered north and northwest thr[illegible]r a quarter of a mile. Then throu[illegible]ild under-growth and over loose st[illegible]

CARTE was not thinki[illegible]; direction, literally speaking. [illegible]t and an agony of apprehension [illegible]im solely, and he traversed the latt[illegible]h of rough going, which brought hi[illegible]a stone's throw of the second *est*[illegible]ation, at a pace which nearly did for [illegible]Ahead of them, as though an answ[illegible]me unformulated query in his hea[illegible]ded a sudden neigh. He crept a[illegible]ther with involuntary caution tha[illegible]deliberate restraint. A faint thrur[illegible]f a guitar guided him round the [illegible]ed, similar

to the one they had left. Before a low, dull fire sat a solitary *gaucho* wrapped in his *ruano*, or poncho, and his legs, covered by *zamarras*, or chaps, curled tailor-fashion under him.

Foot by foot they stole on him. A yard away they rushed him, strangling the cry he would have uttered. They had him helpless in a moment.

"Tie him somewhere," cried Carte, "and follow me!"

A moment more and he had one of the horses in the shed saddled, was on it and away, the *gaucho's* rifle in his possession also. Faintly, a gray lifting of the gloom eastward was occurring.

He galloped recklessly back to the first shed, trying to think—but no thoughts came, because the sole and predominating idea in his mind was a single all-inclusive fact: "Cosio has run off with Delicios!"

Chaffee's laughter poured through him like something alternately molten and icy.

There was light in the shed again. He held the *gaucho's* rifle in readiness as he sprang from the horse. A long form attempted wearily to rise from the ground.

"It's me—Chaffee!" gasped the creature, mistaking him.

For a pulse-beat his grip tightened on the rifle, and almost of its own accord it raised itself in his hands. He shook himself, and gripped up Chaffee and thrust him ahead of him into the shed. Rifle in hand, a man crouched at bay in front of the single lighted lantern next to the one Chaffee had shot out. It was Calderon. Two men lay scattered on the hard ground of the shed, groaning and twitching in agony. They were a *gaucho* and a sailor. The others, along with Llereno, had disappeared. None of the three in all that close-range volleying had been fatally wounded. It was miraculous, but in strict accord with the rules of a Vengentinian revolution. Carte shoved Chaffee across a bunk.

"Watch him! Stay here and watch him!" he commanded Calderon.

He ran back to his horse, not knowing where to go, but only desperate to go somewhere—to do something. In all the mad misery of that night, nothing had ever assaulted his peace or sanity or fears like the gruesome fact that possessed all of him now: "Delicios is being borne off by Cosio!"

He stopped as he was about to remount

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the horse. For the last time that night there approached the frantic galloping of a single horseman. In the dim dawn-light he made out a grotesquely bloated figure shaking like a huge acrobatic pudding on a lathered horse. He stepped back into the door.

"Chaffee! Chaffee!" hailed the newcomer, anxiety, panic, hysteria in his voice.

It was Kenyon.

He tumbled rather than dismounted from the panting horse that had brought him, and staggered helplessly directly against the *gaucho's* rifle, which Carte leveled at him.

"I got you both now! Get in here!" snapped Carte.

He pushed the winded fat man through the door. With Calderon's aid he strapped him hand and foot to a post at the opposite end of the room from Chaffee.

"You've got one chance to live till noon, Kenyon!" Carte stood like Fate above the tied-up assistant manager of the Department of South and Central America of P. W Brill & Co. "Can you tell me anything of Cosio and Delicios de Neyra?"

"Just now—in Chalgres—he passed me going northeast toward the harbor—probably to El Vigia!" gasped Kenyon almost eagerly, terrified at something he saw in the blazing eyes of the man standing over him.

Carte was out of the room and on his horse in a flash. That was where Cosio would aim for—the evil water-front settlement near which they had been brought by the president's launch. It was the gathering-place of the deep-sea and harbor-side scum of the republic, where one could hire a crew of assassins to attempt the conquest of Egypt if one gave them *chichla*, money enough, and a sufficiently preposterous guarantee of impossible safety. Of course, that's where Cosio would head for with Delicios!

THE horse he rode was fresh; Chaffee's horse, bearing the second mate, who was probably no rider, and the dead weight of Delicios in addition, must be exhausted. He galloped over fields, loose rocks, gulleys and hillsides by the cow-path, and not by the rutty path of men along which they had come hours earlier with Chaffee, to the little twisting cattle-road leading in from Cuguagua and, hours and hours beyond that, from Salcedo to a point just above the outcropping bluff under which Garanullos and his companion had waited for them.

A cool gray light made the way visible at least, but he used neither judgment nor sanity on that gallop. He had offered his fate and all his hopes to the capricious dim god of Luck alone. And the great god Luck, admiring the boy's dash over that suicidal course, touched, perhaps, by the flame that burned in his heart for the daughter of Estaban de Neyra, abided by him.

He checked up savagely only when he reached the *camino real.* The road wound immediately out of sight to the southwest, and to the northeast it was cut off by the bulging ledge a hundred feet beyond. He rode past this. Now he could see the road winding the best and hardest portion of its length in a continuously exposed curve down-hill clear into Point El Vigia, a sprinkling of wretched wooden shacks, with one or two old pink or blue homes among them and a fringe of bedraggled, tilting coconut palms. Ahead of him, directly across the field which bordered the road and a smaller hill behind, rose the Hill of Palms. Behind royal poincianas he caught a glimpse of the soft red-tile roof of the president's house crowning it.

The road to El Vigia was bare. Either Cosio had already reached it, if he was heading there, or, if he was heading there, had not yet passed this point. Carte [illegible] have galloped into Point El Vigia [illegible] second mate and Delicios if all [illegible] Luther had been gathered i[illegible]e of water-front villainy ha[illegible] that Cosio was already [illegible] several minutes of indecisi[illegible]d his horse to prance in t[illegible] the highway. And then it [illegible]

From [illegible]t, jutting-out ledge, sandy [illegible]ered with tufts of weedy vegetat[illegible]n hid the *camino real* from him. [illegible]he southwest, came the flagging tattoo of hoof-beats. He reined his horse quietly behind the encroaching bluff and waited. The next moment Cosio, Delicios on the saddle in front of him, rounded the bend. The second mate of the *La Palma* was looking anxiously across the fields in the direction of de Neyra's mansion, as though whatever danger there might be to him was to be expected from that direction. He did not see Carte until the latter was almost on him, and then

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Cosio was too late by the whole great length of the arm of Justice.

The rifle Carte had taken from the *gaucho* descended on the sailor's wicked little head, and he toppled off Chaffee's greatly relieved horse like a sack of provisions that has slipped its hitching. Carte had lifted Delicios out of his loosened clutch, and Chaffee's horse stopped stock-still in the center of the road and eyed him with doleful gratitude as though to say:

"Great Scott, brother, why didn't you come sooner? This has been a hard night. That swine under my feet was heavy as lead. If I weren't so dog-gone horse-tired I'd tap him behind the ear with my stern larboard hoof, but it isn't worth the trouble."

Carte paid no attention to what the horse might be saying. His arms were tight round Delicios. Even she could only say, "Russell—thank God, you—you, dear!" before his lips on hers stopped her.

"Father—" she finally asked, just when the Chaffee-Cosio horse had witnessed about as much of *that* as he could stand.

"Safe, dear! We are going to him now."

He managed to raise Cosio on the horse again, the abused steed turning his head to eye him reproachfully at this new outrage. One hand gripping the second-mate's arm and holding his limp frame in the saddle, and with Delicios in front of him, he made a slow soothing progress across the first field to the hill, rounded it and crossed de Vds to the Hill of Palms.

A ... rds from the president's hou... led by a company of the Federal ... a which rose as though the gent... ered it had had but one thou... vs: to serve their country, t... nd Russell Clark Carte, and ... to check any incipient insurrectio... their head was Markey's General Wh... 's-his-name, a paunchy yet delicately swiveled weather-cock whose position at any moment indicated the direction of the political breeze. His presence told Carte better than any account how completely the revolution against de Neyra had failed.

Estaban de Neyra met them in the patio of his mansion. Behind all his dignity of pure white flowing beard and beaverlike mustachios, the reestablished President of Vengentina trembled with emotion, and his eyes were suspiciously moist as he took Delicios in his arms. Still holding her, he extended one hand to Carte and gripped it warmly. He led them both within.

"What—what happened? Is this the world? Do you know, father? Does any one know?" Delicios asked, passing her hand over her forehead as though waking from a dream.

"I received the photographic copies of the documents," de Neyra answered. "I was astounded at the extent of the plot against me, and yet I could do nothing except wait for munitions for my troops and hope that you in the United States would block the others. I certainly could not have arrested Vasco Garanullos and the entire Federal Troop. Then came your wireless—" He looked at Carte, who looked wonderingly at Delicios.

"I sent it, father," she said quietly.

"You! Bravo! But it put me into new difficulties. The palace troops whom I had ordered here deserted. And—*Dios!*—my army had disappeared and with it Martinez. There was nothing left for me to do but flee—and for that I was too old a man," he said proudly. "Suddenly one of my generals who had been against me, and an *Americano*—Markey."

"Markey?" repeated Delicios.

"Yes, dear; the old taxi-bandit is safe. And, by the way, your Excellency, do not forget to make a note of a bill for one taxicab to be paid to a well-known philanthropic association of New York."

"A taxi?" puzzled de Neyra.

"Later, *señor*. Please go on."

"I do not understand. But—the *Americano* and the others defended me against an attack here. At the same time, from the direction of Bas Obispo and Santa Rita, my army entered Porto Quyaba, sweeping the Carozalists before them with an unceasing rain of bullets——"

"Rain of bullets?" interrupted Delicios, in amazement at the underlying fact and not at the mixed metaphor. "But where—" She turned to Carte. "You—it must have been you! You arranged it all without any of us knowing. What did you do?"

Carte rose and took both her hands.

"Forgive me, dear, that I did not even tell you. After things swung into shape in New York, I never had the opportunity of telling you alone. Either Llereno or Calderon or

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Aranjo or some one was always with you. Señor Calderon secured the munitions in Connecticut, and I undertook to have them brought to New York. Only, I didn't. I had them sent to Norfolk. Then I looked round for a boat. I had one chartered, and at the last moment I hit on a better one—one which would never be suspected of carrying arms for us. The morning Kenyon's rifles were taken out of the hold of the *Skudenshavn*, I contracted with old Skáars Hasvik to call at Norfolk for my rifles and deliver them in Santa Rita. He did, you see."

"The *Skudenshavn*! *Ay*, thou *Norte Americano*!" exclaimed Delicios.

"Dear, now Vengentina has got a revolution which will last her for all time. It's so complete that it has spun clean round, and your father is back where he should be, safe and powerful. And, dear, although I love Vengentina, I know her. You can have a revolution here if one man knows about it. If two know, you have a counterplot. If three know, an intrigue; if four, a conspiracy; if five, a national movement, and if six know about it—well, if six or more know about it, it's a riot, a *fiesta*, an increase of taxes and a procession with a special band concert in the Campo de Publico for a week.

"This was to be final and serious action. When I get a cable to Hancock Square and O. C. Vollbrecht gets word of this night here, then life here is going to be stable and serene, because your father will be assured of the fullest support of the United States. As for Kenyon and Chaffee, I am going to have them taken to the geometric center of my Madagalpa plantation and turned loose. They are a pair of ex-jungle-runners, and I figure that they can feast their eyes and their feet in that wilderness they were so fond of for about five weeks, when their old sense of direction will come back to them and they can find the road home again."

"Don't do that, Russell. Any wireless to Panama would make it simpler——"

"Well, little goddess"—Carte laughed—"I guess one of those launches trimmed out with twelve-inch guns and flying the Red, White and Blue ought to have space in it sufficiently strong to hold that skinny man and his fat partner, at that, till they get where they can be taken care of effectively, as you say, and indefinitely, as I hope."

She came close and put her arms round him.

"Kiss me, Russell," she whispered.

"You ask me to do that—shame on me!" answered Carte, and held her tightly and did it.

SOME one gripped his shoulders and tore him away furiously. He just saved himself from falling backward and saw Llereno, muddy, unkempt, two bluish bruises on his face, and with the old insane mad jealousy in his eyes and distorting still further his already disfigured face.

"You—you liar!" He pointed at Delicios.

De Neyra rose abruptly. Carte was restrained by her clasp on his arm.

"You promised me my answer now!" mouthed Llereno. "The day your father was safe!"

"I did," answered Delicios, drawing Carte back to her.

"And I come on you—you—" He could not find words in his rage. "You promised me on your own word—you, a de Neyra!—and on the word of the daughter of the president of this nation—that you would never marry him!"

She snuggled still closer to Carte.

"I promised you that, Ramon, because you compelled me unfairly and because it is true. I will never marry Russell."

Llereno stammered inarticulately a moment.

"And—and you permit him to kiss you—to— *Sacro Cristo!* What is he to you?"

"He is my Prince of the Taxi, but I will never marry him, Ramon," Delicios repeated, and looked up smilingly at Carte, "because, you see, Russell and I were married in Washington three weeks ago."

From outside in the garden came a voice operati[illegible]on some lyrical phrases in a manner by no possible mistake could be regarded as singing. The best that could be said of it was that it was a very distinct, far-reaching manner of handling lyrical phrases that it operated, if not in English accents, at least in those of New York. The burden of his labors was:

I [illegible]' she wus dare;
I [illegible]' she wus not.
B[illegible] r she wus dare 'r not
Is [illegible] I fergot.

"Here c[illegible] real Prince of the Taxi!" said Russell Carte softly to Delicios de Neyra (

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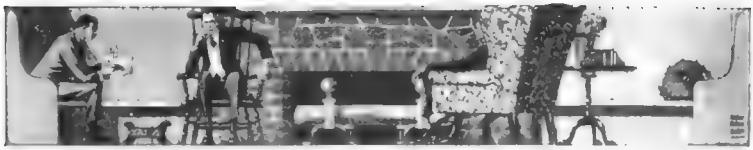

Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

THE beginning of one of the big numbers of EVERYBODY'S 1923 program is offered this month —"The Lariat," by Honoré Willsie, with which the book opens. And in connection with this new serial, Mrs. Willsie has something interesting to say about two methods of writing novels.

I spent last summer up on Nantucket Island. There were people up there who had read my story, "Godless Valley," and they expressed great horror that such conditions as I had pictured could exist in a civilized country. My reply was that, as far as morals was concerned or spiritual starvation young people, there probably was not a state in Union that did not possess its Godless Valley. ere so—and they did not grant that it was for argument—they asked me why I my story in the East or the Middle was that, when I wanted to get an a[udience] that it was more convincing to tell [a story] action of the West than in the non-ac[tion] tions.

THIS led to a [discussion] the new type of novel again[st] type. Mrs. Willsie continues:

We designated as new the form ess story of the workings of the minds in t ters of a novel. We agreed that Conrad's " im" was probably a sample of this new its best. Several of the people present exp nk scorn of the novel that sought to e e hero's psychology in terms of action. id such novels were Victorian—childish yet, in further discussion, this same criti d rather have written "Kim" than any c in the world, and still later said that ' Island" was the most perfect novel ever w

Another person said that nov should be subject to form as much as p But the plotting of a story into action wa id intri- cate art that has reached its p rfection only through generations of inv l study.

He had no patience with folk who wrote free verse or plotless novels. So that's that! At any rate, "The Lariat" tells the story of a man whose work expressed his thought, and whose thought was what it was, first, because of his type of brain, and second, because that brain was born, bred and, trained in a Western environment. I found the material for the story in Wyoming and wrote most of it in Nantucket. The rest is on the lap of the gods.

FANNYE JORDAN TREASTER, author of "Projectitis" (page 82), thinks that "most of the books of the past are but crude and unfinished as compared with the works of our present-day masters." The story of the day and of the future, she declares, is the character-development story in place of the plot-building one. She continues:

Usually I begin with a character or characters and build my story about him or them, but in this case ["Projectitis"], I began with the idea. I used no particular boy. Junior is only a type. Yet one of my neighbors took the story home for a reading. Her young son of fifteen also read it. Upon finishing it, he called out to his mother indignantly,

"What business has she got writing about me?"

AND now for some of the secrets about husbands of writers:

I'm reminded that, when I informed my severest critic, my husband, that I'd sold another story, he asked,

"Which one?"

"'Projectitis,'" I answered.

"That thing?"

"Why," I defended, "it's the best that I've done!"

Unfortunately, that is one of the things about which we disagree—my writing. And, strange to say, when rarely I do write something which meets with his approval, it doesn't sell. And if

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Honoré Willsie on the beach at Siasconset, Nantucket Island, where, last summer, she wrote a great part of "The Lariat." (See page 5.)

you'd ask him, "Who among the people of this vast universe most justly deserve the martyr's through ticket to heaven?" he'd answer, "The husband of a writer." However, I, too, claim the ticket. Still warm with enthusiasm over a newly finished story, I take it to his Honor for a reading and an opinion. I watch as he turns the pages, and with bated breath I wait for him to speak. Not a word does he utter. He picks up his unfinished newspaper and begins to scan its pages for the place where he left off. Finally, I can stand the suspense no longer.

"Well! What do you think of it?" I ask.

He then looks up from his paper, gives me an impersonal stare and answers, with maddening nonchalance,

"Oh, all right!"

So this goes to prove the world-old saying that home folks never appreciate you.

BY WAY of pointing out that fiction sometimes does something besides entertain, we quote from a letter in regard to "Rolling Restaurants" by Richardson Wright, which appeared in August EVERYBODY'S:

I have just finished reading "Rolling Restaurants" and find myself so delighted with its theme, its action and plausibility, that I must applaud, show my appreciation to you as an editor and, through you, the author of this truly inspiring and enjoyable novel.

In passing, I might add that, after having spent four long years studying law, I now find myself trying to put over a new idea in the line of restaurants in this city, and feel that I shall be able to use a few of Mr. Wright's ideas in a practical way.

ANOTHER reader of "Rolling Restaurants" wants to know something about Mr. Wright's attitude toward prohibition. He replies:

I trust our friend has luck in that string of rolling restaurants. Personally, I think there is something in the idea. My attitude on the saloon and liquor in general is that, although it did bring a great deal of unhappiness into the world, it also brought a great deal of happiness, and since we cannot have good liquor any more, we at least can have the reminders of those places where we used to get it.

Fannye Jordan Treaster, author of "Projectitis." (See page 82.)

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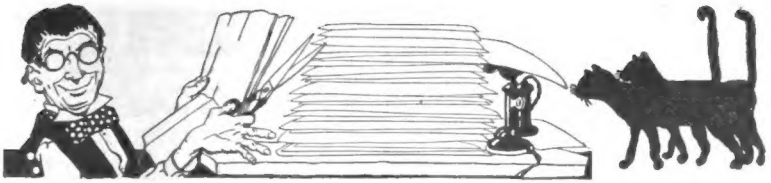

Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEV-E IN SIGNS?

Found in catalogue of Oakland, Cal., Public Library: "'*The Potato*,' *by Grubb.* '*The Horse*,' *by Speed.* '*Fruit Recipes*,' *by Berry.* '*Plant Life*,' *by Farmer.* '*Afraid*,' *by Darke.* '*Small-Pox*,' *by Ricketts & Byles.*" (C. L.)

In Washington: "*Stubblefield, Real Estate.*"

Near Philadelphia: "*Hosea Waterer, Seedsman & Florist.*"

In Baltimore: "*R. Sugar, Grocer. Sacks, Tailor. J. & J. Needle, Merchant Tailors. Cotton, Tailor. Knell, Undertaker. Jones & Lamb, Meat Packers. Ditch Bros., Props. Brookland Farm Dairy.*" (G. E. H.)

In Salt Lake City: "*Prof. Geo. Careless, Teacher of Violin, Piano, Harmony.*" (E. T. S.)

In Chicago: "*Hale & Hardy, Undertakers.*"

In Sioux City: "*Free & Pickus, Attorneys.*"

In Union, S. C.: "*Jolly, the Clothier.*" (M. F. S.)

In Horicon, Wis.: "*Adam Krusl Meat Market.*" (E. E. K.)

In Watertown, S. Dak.: "*Otto Luck.*"

In Nashville, Tenn.: "*Old & Weakley, Insurance Agents.*"

In Madison, Wis.: "*Mr. Dewey Breeze.*"

(*Lincoln, Ill., Evening Courier*)

daze and did not know what he was
mpered his wife with a flat-iron.

She h married man could have told him

(*Waterton*

FOR SALE—A black do nearly new. C. WOOLEY 676 Burcha)

Something on the order of a ary-colored Maltese cat.

(*Chicago Herald-Examine*

M. S.—The relatives of a deceased e not entitled to apply for the bonus. n for same must be made by the soldie c.)

That ghost to show how mu e the buddies have to get theirs.

(*Livermore Falls, Me., Adve*

Ralph Mitchell has begun pic wberries from his bed. E. L.)

But that hain't the hull of it, d

(*Santa Barbara, Cal., News*)

WOULD LIKE TO RENT HOUSE FURNISHed, suitable for chickens. Good responsible party. Please tell location and price. Will take a year's lease. Box 50, *Daily News*. (MRS. E. M. G.)

Show me the chickens.

(*Brooklyn Times*)

BURNS-COAL WEDDING AT CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF REFUGE. (G. R. M'E.)

And the organist brought tears to the eyes of many of those present when he rendered those two old favorites: "Ashes to Ashes" and "'Twas Simply Grate."

(*In Jersey City*)

Mrs. May B. Dear.

And then again:

(*Chicago Daily News*)

WANTED—By a settled young man, room and board with nice widow lady who would naturally like a little company and protection; must be reasonable.

Try Jersey City, above.

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(*Titusville, Penn., Herald*)

Pearly Sipps, violating liquor laws, sentenced to pay a fine of $500 and serve ten months in the workhouse.

Gee! At that rate, it's lucky he didn't take a whole swallow.

(*Belleview, Ill., Gazette*)

Mr. and Mrs. Lewman Kline, of Franklin Heights Apartments, were hosts at a costume-party and dinner Saturday. There were fifteen guests. The decorations were butterflies.

Oh, 'fevvens sake!

(*Sanish, N. D., Sentinel*)

W. P. Barstad returned from Bismarck Saturday, after having been in the hospital with his leg. He was much relieved.

Old-time bunkies.

(*Pittsburgh Press*)

WANTED—Man to repair, straighten and raise house. JOHN J. MCINERNEY, Fifth Ave and Ross St. Bell 'Phone, Grant 632. (H. L. C.)

But she's a darned good house for the shape she's in.

(*Kalamazoo, Mich., Progressive Herald*)

I have a large stock of goods consisting of rugs, bedsteads, mattresses and bed-springs. Also I have counters and show-cases, office chairs and desks, a few shotguns.

Marry that girl, young man, and come and see us. M. A. NEWTON.

But it's their appetite that holds me back.

(*Bourbon, Ind., Mirror*)

Dedicated to Almighty God—The big, new, handsome store of Stoffer & Co. opened for business at 8:30 last Saturday and at 6:30 there was an autoload of people from a distance there waiting for the event. The evening before, or Friday evening, the stockholders and their families, also Frank Foe, were guests at a banquet in the rest-room of the store. The invitations read as follows: We take pleasure in extending you an invitation to meet with us on Friday evening, Sept. 30th, at 7 o'clock in our new storeroom for a light lunch and a short praise-service to Almighty God. We feel that the Lord has been very good and gracious in providing the way possible for us to bring to completion such a fine new building.

The dedication of the business to Almighty God was something not before known of in Methodism in Indiana, and Rev. Riley found in it a distinction certainly appreciated.

The sale lasts all this week, and bargains galore await the customers.

Guess I'll count my change, just the same.

(*Personal in Augusta, Ga., Chronicle*)

HORACE—Please do not 'phone me again. Father is cleaning his gun. LULU.

There's a helpmeet for you.

(*Wisconsin State Journal*)

WANTED—Bedbugs for zoological research work. Call at room 151, Biology Building.

Well, for re-search work they beat anything I know.

(*Chicago Tribune*)

Elston Farmers' Market—Floral Department—Goldfish, two for 15 cents.

Next week, ice-cream and embalming in all its branches.

(*Duncan, Okla., Eagle*)

The touching part of the evening was when Mrs. Lillian Wilson revealed the pasts of all the present lines in their hands, the different expressions were: "You have told enough." "Who told you that?" and "Yes; that is so." After telling the past, getting every one excited and wanting to know their future, they could think of the future no longer, for at that time the finish of the evening was made known by serving lovely cake and cocoa.

Please pass the prunes.

(*Adv. in Hartford Courant*)

FOR SALE—New and used sewing-machines, any make, prices under the other fellows, no agents or collectors; ice-cream machine, to manufacture same; pulleys, engines, nearly new, bargains, new magnificent pop-corn and peanut roaster, complete, 5 French bevel plate mirrors, equipped with magnificent electric light, red, white and blue, representative of Old Glory, which every born man, woman and child and many other people that have never seen the U. S. A., or been introduced even to Uncle Sam, not only respect, but love so dearly—if they never had the great privilege of even ever visiting, never want to leave it to remain even to their dear father- or motherland, although the place of their birth and no matter if it is the loveliest spot and dearest on earth to them, where many million mothers and fathers have sacrificed their only beloved son or daughter to fight for the Stars and Stripes. Let us all hope and pray to our Maker forever, however, no more millionaires, let us thank the Great Almighty for making this great and perfectly willing sacrifice, even if they knew they would never meet their loved ones again, so including father, mother, wife, children or sweetheart again. Capewell's Diamond, Automobile, Piano, Phonograph Cut-Price Shop, 200 Church st., near Brown, Thomson & Co., open from 8 o'clock to 10:30 every week day only. Terms on all goods, $1 weekly. Tel. 3-9583. (M. E. H.)

Where one thing just had to lead to another.

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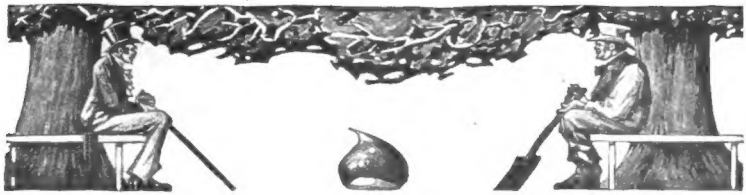

Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

A SHABBILY dressed man was standing on the streets of Washington, D. C. At a window of a near-by house a woman observed persons who were passing occasionally step up to him and pass some money. Touched at this scene, the woman hurriedly wrote a note: "Never say die," and, placing it in an envelope with a two-dollar bill, went out and gave it to the man.

Four days later, returning from a shopping-expedition, she was accosted by the man, who said:

"Here you are, lady—thirty-four dollars. Never Say Die won the race at sixteen to one."

LITTLE Johnny was seeking information from his father.

"Father," he asked, "freight is goods that are sent by water or land, isn't it?"

"That's right, son."

"Well then, why is it that the freight that goes by ship is called a , and when it goes by car it is called a it?"

And then Johnny wondered her put on his hat and sauntered to get the air.

THERE was hardly even sta om in the crowded tram, but a yo an wedged her way just inside the d

Each time the car made a s or- ward lurch she fell back, and t nes she landed in the arms of a portl ho was standing on the platform. ird time it happened, he said quietly,

"Excuse me; but hadn't you l ay here?"

A-BOASTIN' an' a-braggin' 'bout yo'self an' de pore triflin' things yo' does ain't seemly in de eyes of yore Maker, my bredd ern," preached the Reverend Plato Stebbins. "De good book proclaims, 'Pride cometh befo' de spill an' de humble goose hatches de golden aig.' "

"A 'no-count niggah onct saved de lives ob six white folks when de levee bust by rowin' dem five miles 'crost de flooded fiel's an' den drapped dead from heart-failure when de boat touched land.

"When he git to hebben, St. Peter hand him a golden harp an' sez: 'Brudder, I'se heered 'bout yo' savin' dem people. Welcome to de domicile ob de righteous. Take yo' seat 'mong de notabilities here at my right hand.'

"Dem words jist nacherlly swell dat niggah's haid fitten to bust, an' when he finds hisself a seat he puts his harp on his knee an', smashin' his fingers back an' forth 'crost de strings, sings out reel loud, 'Ah saved six white folks from de flood!'

" 'Tut, tut!' sez an ole man settin' a few seats furder up.

"But dis niggah jist give him a squint outen de corner ob his eye an' kept on singin' an' playin'.

" 'Tut, tut, tut!' " sez de ole man again, louder an' more sarcastical like.

Dis vain niggah was kinda set back by dis time, so he stops his singin' an' axes de man nex' to him,

" 'Who am dis ole duffer what aks so jealous like?'

" 'Him?' sez de man. 'Why, dat's Noah.' "

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A YOUNG man arrived home after having received the degree of M. A. for graduate work at college.

"I suppose Robert will be looking for a Ph. D. next," said a friend of the family to the father.

"No; he will be looking for a J. O. B."

THE judge looked sternly at the prisoner.

"It is very evident that you are a plain, no-account and shiftless person, Kaspar, and for this I am going to send you away for a year at hard labor."

"Please, Judge," interrupted Mrs. Kaspar from the rear of the court-room, "will yo' Honnah jes' split dat sentence? Don't send him away from home, but jes' let dat hard labor stand."

TIM O'BRIEN had unfortunately figured in one or two accidents, but this time he was one of the occupants of the car who were considered seriously injured, and was rushed off to the hospital to be operated on. He had partially recovered from the anesthetic and was looking round in dazed condition. As the nurse approached his bedside, he asked feebly:

"Where am I? What is this place?"

The nurse took his hand gently.

"You have been very badly injured in an automobile accident, but you will recover," she replied.

"Recover!" said Tim in a high-pitched voice, and tried to raise himself up. "Recover! How much?"

MRS. FULLER, the mistress of a Boston apartment, had been without a maid for ten days and was showing a prospective one through the flat. She had been most liberal in her promises of privileges in regard to afternoons and evenings off, and had even gone so far as to extend the hou of the girl's return on these nights.

The applicant seemed duly impres and the mistress was equally so. The walked into the dining-room.

"Do you do your own stretchin'?" the girl demanded.

"Do we do our own what?"

"Stretchin'," repeated the girl.

"I don't understand you."

"Stretchin'. Do you put the stuff on the table at meal-time and stretch for it, or do I have to shuffle it around?"

"DO YOU know what I consider the height of good luck?" said Briggs. "To upset an inkstand—when it is empty."

"DOES your husband play cards for money?"

"No," replied Mrs. Torkins thoughtfully; "I don't think Harry plays for money, but all the people who play with him do."

SALESGIRL (*to companion*): "The man who bought that five-pound box of chocolates said it was for his wife."

"Is he just married?"

"Either that, or he's done something."

THE army officer was seeking recruits for a colored cavalry regiment, and had his eye on one particularly fine specimen.

"Rastus," he pleaded, "don't you want to join Uncle Sam's cavalry?"

"No, sah," the prospect replied emphatically. "When de bugle soun's for retreat, Ah doan' wan't to be encombered by no horse."

A WELL-DRESSED, portly woman had boarded the train at the last minute and inadvertently taken a seat in the car reserved for smokers.

In a few moments a man directly behind began filling his pipe, and shortly to smoke pervaded the whole car.

"Sir," she announced in a voice, "smoking always makes me

The offender puffed and at the same time repli

"It really do en, take my advice, mad up."

DUR e of a trial some years ag as asked by the prosecuting e knew what it meant to take

eplied,

To take an oath means that you swea to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

"What happens if you do not tell the truth?" asked the judge.

"If you do not tell the truth, you Honor," replied the witness, "it mean that you are dishonored in the sight of God, dishonored in the sight of man—in fact, you are dishonored in the sight of every one except lawyers."

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